

FRANKLIN H CHASE



EX LIBRIS

Thou fool to seek companions in the crowd
Into thy room and there upon thy knees
Before thy bookshelves humbly thank thy God
That thou hast friends like these



THE KENDALS



Photo by Barrand

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL.

(Frontispiece.)

THE KENDALS

A BIOGRAPHY

BY

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T. W. ROBERTSON," "CHARLES DICKENS AND THE STAGE,"
"JOHN HARE, COMEDIAN," &c., &c.

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PREFACE

MANY years have elapsed since my old friend Mrs. Kendal promised me that "in the days to come" I should write the story of her life; and ever since then I have been industriously collecting material for it; a task made easy for me by reason of my close, constant, and valued friendship with her and her husband.

In 1893, after he had published my lives of E. A. Sothern and T. W. Robertson, the late Mr. George Bentley, of the firm of Messrs. Richard Bentley & Son, asked me if I could give him a book on "The Kendals." I consulted my friends, on all sides willingness was expressed, but it was ultimately decided that the time for the work had not arrived.

At the commencement of the present year the necessary consent from "The Kendals" was given, and I commenced my narrative.

Now it happened that, when it was too late for me to "go back," Mrs. Kendal grew nervous, declaring (which is true) that except in the exercise of her art she had never courted publicity, and that, through pure diffidence, she would rather her Life should remain unwritten.

"Write my husband's Life if you desire," she wrote to me, "and only mention me as you would any other actress he has played with. *His* career should be written, and *he* does not mind, only ignore *me* as much as you possibly can! I *prefer it*."

Naturally I am anxious to fulfil Mrs. Kendal's wishes, but I fear in the pages that follow she may not be "ignored" in proportion with her desire. If this causes her—and (as a matter of consequence) me—annoyance, I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that my friend Kendal will forgive me for picturing his accomplished wife in the position she fills so worthily and well, and of which he is justly proud.

We all know that Charles Dickens's Mr. Dick could never keep the head of King Charles I. out of his Memorial. If in like manner I cannot banish the gracious presence of Mrs. Kendal

from my chapters, I hope I shall find numbers of trusty Betsy Trotwoods to certify that I am “not out of my mind”—and of kindly readers to echo as she did “he sets us all right.”

Indeed my excuse might be found in Mr. Kendal’s own words on his leavetaking of the St. James’s Theatre in 1888. “With Mrs. Kendal we have done what we have done; without her, we could, indeed, have done but little.”

T. EDGAR PEMBERTON.

August 11, 1899.

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CHAPTER I

WILLIAM HUNTER GRIMSTON

WILLIAM HUNTER GRIMSTON, the son of an artist, was born in London on December 16, 1843. The artistic instinct was in him, and grew with him, and no doubt his first longing was for palette, brush, and easel. But, in view of the difficulties and disappointments they have had to encounter and overcome, English fathers rarely recommend their sons to follow their calling, and it was decided that the boy should be educated for the medical profession. The boy grew up to the young man, working for his examinations, and gaining experience at hospitals, but his natural bent was continually asserting itself, and whenever he had an idle hour his pencil was in his hand and his sketch-book on his knee. Indeed it was with the object of making sketches of the performers in a burlesque of "Billy Taylor, or

the Gay Young Fellow," that he betook himself on an eventful evening in 1861 to the Royal Soho (now the Royalty) Theatre in Dean Street, Soho. Mr. Mowbray, the manager of the theatre, and the author of the burlesque, saw the young artist at his work, recognised its cleverness, and good-naturedly gave him free use of the house, both before and behind the curtain, for its continuance. And this is how it came about that William Hunter Grimston yielded to the fascinating beams of the foot-lights, and, for the first time, longed to be an actor.

Mr. Mowbray, who at about this time had such coming celebrities as Miss Ellen Terry, David James, Charles Wyndham, and H. J. Montague in his company, was quite willing to give the handsome and in every way attractive young fellow his chance, and on Saturday, April 6, 1861, we find a hitherto unknown "Mr. Kendall" (the name was spelt with two "l's" then) figuring in the bills as Louis XIV. in a play called "A Life's Revenge." In those days the stage was not recognised (as it happily is at the end of our century) as one of the artistic professions, and with young men of birth and breeding who resolved to try a throw

with fortune upon it, it was the custom to assume a name. Two reasons have been assigned for young Grimston's choice of "Kendal," or "Kendall." Mr. Mowbray was consulted, and that ingenious gentleman thought in the first place that "Kendal" was happily like the famous theatrical name of Kemble; and in the second, that as Garrick and Grimston both began with a "G," and as the great David made his first appearance behind the Ipswich footlights under the *nom de guerre* of "Lyddol," that of "Kendall" might be of happy omen.

Be that as it may, it remained for the young aspirant to make the name of Kendal affectionately borne in mind, and familiar as a household word, in two hemispheres.

For some twelve months he stayed at the Soho Theatre, but now, having definitely decided on his career, he was wise and courageous enough to see that some rough, useful work in a provincial stock company would be of far more service to him than the easier and more attractive life of playing comparatively minor parts at a West-end London theatre.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1862 he pluckily accepted an offer, at a ridiculous salary, to join

what was by courtesy called the "stock company" at the Moor Street Theatre, Birmingham, a badly built and badly managed structure in a most disagreeable locality. I well remember the wretched place and the crude method of its productions. But for a determined young actor who wanted plenty of hard work, and absolutely courted the useful practice that a constant change of parts gives, it suited its purpose well—and Mr. Kendal never faltered, and with praiseworthy vigour attacked the curious experiences that commenced with a small part in the ghastly drama of "Sweeney Tod; or, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street." Many years after this, and when he was fulfilling one of his brilliant Birmingham engagements, he took me to see a dingy little lodging-house which he made his home in the "Sweeney Tod days," and told me how at the same time his comrade Bancroft (now Sir Squire Bancroft) was doing his 'prentice work at the Birmingham Theatre Royal; and he pointed out a very modest tavern in which the two on a famous Saturday night celebrated a slight advance in their poor salaries by indulging in the almost unheard-of extravagance of a beefsteak supper! In still later days Sir Squire Bancroft, who oddly enough did not



THE BIRMINGHAM INN,
WHERE KENDAL AND BANCROFT SUPPED IN 1862.

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revisit Birmingham until he was at the height of his fame (not, indeed, until he had practically retired from the stage) took me on a similar prowl, and looked quite affectionately on the dismal "diggings" in which he had made the best of things in the anxious days of long ago. His first appearance had been (hidden under a huge grotesque mask) in a non-speaking part in a Christmas pantomime, and he seemed quite pleased when I told him (he had forgotten it) the outlandish title of the production, and how I remembered it well, and possessed the playbill recording his initial attempt. From this it will be seen that these two gently nurtured and highly cultured young fellows, having decided on their own paths in life, were absolutely determined not to prey upon their friends but to swim or sink upon their earnings. That is how good actors were made in the despised "early sixties."

How different are things to-day when, after a few feeble amateur efforts, well-dressed young gentlemen not only think themselves fitted for the stage but, provided they are in command of money or influence, absolutely secure London engagements!

My friend Edward Saker once told me a

droll story of a witless stage aspirant of this class whom, against his better judgment, he was induced to engage during his actor-managership of the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool. The superfine and absolutely self-satisfied young gentleman blundered through a few rehearsals, but when the evening for his first appearance arrived did not come to the theatre. He had not left his address, and there was nothing for it but, at a moment's notice, to send on a quick understudy to play his part. The next evening he turned up, and when asked for his excuse, he said, "Oh, I say you know, it was such a beastly wet night, you know, that a fellow really couldn't turn out!"

I have heard Mrs. Kendal laugh, too, over her experiences with a similarly constituted would-be actor who asked her and her husband to give him an engagement on the strength of the fact that he had just been appearing with one of our most noted actors in an important Shakespearean revival at a leading London theatre. She good-naturedly said, "Let me hear you recite something, and then perhaps I can tell you if I can help you." His reply was that "he did not think he could remember anything at that moment." "But," said Mrs. Kendal, "you can

surely give me the lines that you have been repeating at this great Shakespearean production!" Then came the ridiculous but perfectly self-confident admission that the part with which he had been entrusted was *not a speaking one!*

Indeed these days are different to those in which young Kendal and his compeers worked, and, by dint of self-sacrificing enthusiasm for the art they loved, and were determined at any cost to follow, fitted themselves to become the finest actors of to-day.

Well might Mr. W. S. Gilbert say when, in his own inimitable manner, he indulged in rhymed reminiscence at the famous Lydia Thompson benefit given at the Lyceum in the early part of the present year—the *bénéficiaire* speaking his lines:—

“What changes here I see since that dim age
When little Goldenhair tripped on the stage!
The Drama, struggling then in lodgings shady,
Has made her fortune, and is quite the lady,
With endless hosts of highly cultured friends.
Think how she dresses now, and what she spends
On vast dramatic shrines—in sumptuous salaries,
In real Venetian-leathered pits and galleries—
In plays that run a year to houses packed,
And cost, to stage, a thousand pounds an Act!

Stage-management—*that* has advanced a bit
 Since poor Tom Robertson invented it—
 Tom Robertson, whose histrionic chickens
 We sneer at now—but then we sneer at Dickens
 Knighthoods for actors of pronounced ability,
 Earls, countesses—engaged to play ‘utility.’

Stock companies completely out of date,
 Burlesque quite dead (it never had that fate
 When Talfourd, Planché, Brough, and Byron made it,
 And Rogers, Clarke, and Marie Wilton played it) ;
 Then, strangest thing, of playhouses vast crops !
 Playhouses plentiful as grocers’ shops !
 Ten in twelve months ! Well, I don’t want to prate,
 But if new theatres crop up at this rate
 Where will you find your pieces, if you please,
 And where your actors and your actresses ?
 Ten months will build a playhouse per contractor—
 It takes at least ten years to build an actor,
 And, as our best authorities insist,
 Ten times ten years to build a dramatist ! ”

With characteristic “pluck” Mr. Kendal continued to persevere in Birmingham until the manager of the doomed Moor Street playhouse drifted into the Bankruptcy Court, and then he obtained an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow. As a member of the stock company of that theatre he remained during four useful, hardworking years, perfecting himself in elocution, stage presence, dancing, singing, fencing, and all the arts that should be at the finger-

ends of the well-graced actor. No part came amiss to him, or was declined by him. From harlequin in pantomime to important Shakespearean characters, he earnestly worked his way onwards, and met with the reward of his determination.

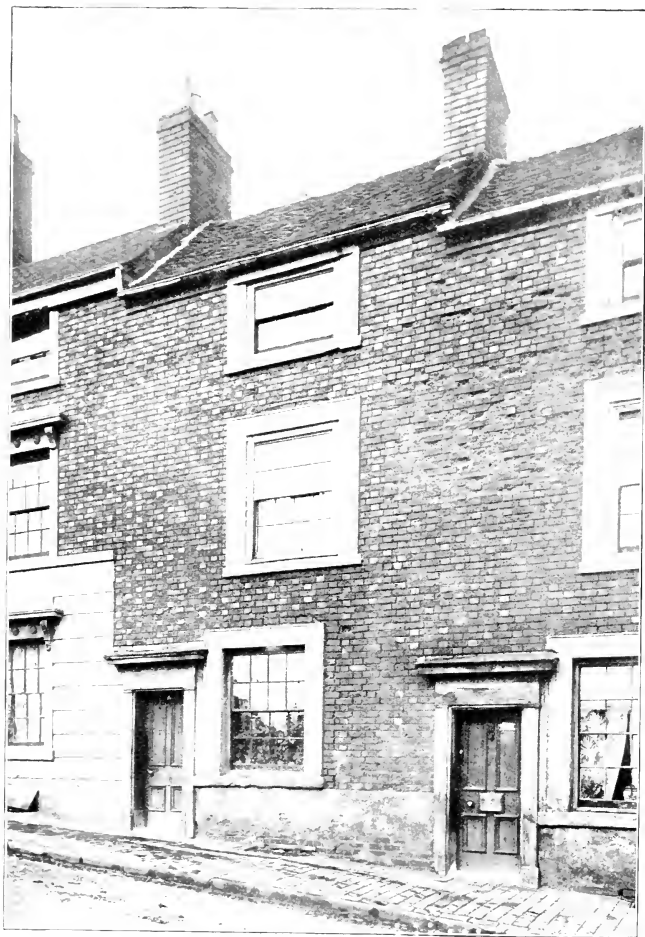
During these four years he was called upon to support such "stars" (it was the custom of the time for them to travel without their own companies, and to rely on the support of the local stock actors) as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps, Helen Faucit, G. V. Brooke, James Anderson, Dion Boucicault, Fechter, Sothorn, and Charles Mathews. One and all noted the promise of the enthusiastic young actor, and many flattering offers were made him, but I believe it was the discriminating Mathews who persuaded Buckstone to secure him as a member of the Haymarket Company, and he made his first appearance on those historic boards on October 31, 1866, as Augustus Mandeville in "A Dangerous Friend." He soon made his way to the front, playing Romeo and Orlando to the Juliet and Rosalind of Mrs. Scott Siddons, and creating the part of the drunken workman, Bob Levitt, in Tom Taylor's well-known play, "Mary Warner," with Miss

Bateman as the heroine. This was a most admirable performance. Miss Bateman subsequently made "Mary Warner" immensely popular in the provinces, and it is an odd fact that it was especially loved by *policemen*, who flocked to see it because the *prison scenes were so well done!*

In those days Mr. Kendal did not disdain burlesque, and I well remember how excellent he was in "The Frightful Hair," in which Mr. F. C. Burnand wittily parodied Lord Lytton's "The Rightful Heir," then being played by Herr Bandmann at the Lyceum. Mr. Kendal's imitation of the German actor's appearance and somewhat extravagant methods was intensely droll, and his rendering of a song to the air of Sir Arthur Sullivan's captivating "From Rock to Rock" nightly brought down the house.

It was soon after this that Miss Madge Robertson returned, after fulfilling engagements elsewhere, to the Haymarket, and—well, in the summer of 1869 she became "Mrs. Kendal Grimston."

At that time the famous Haymarket comedians were fulfilling an engagement at Manchester. Their repertory was a large one, and it was arranged that the happy young couple should be



KENDAL'S BIRMINGHAM LODGINGS.

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AIRBORN

married on a day when they would not be required to act. As early as nine o'clock on the morning of August 7, 1869, the ceremony took place at St. Saviour's Church, Manchester, and they were on the point of starting for a brief honeymoon when the unwelcome news reached them that Mr. Compton, who was immensely popular in Manchester, and was to be the star of the evening, was suddenly called away to the death-bed of a relative, that "As You Like It" had been announced, and that bride and bridegroom must appear as Rosalind and Orlando.

This, in duty bound, and fondly hoping that the news of their marriage had not been made public, they did ; but when it came to the lines, "Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?" and Orlando answered, "I will," a mighty uproar of applause and cheering told them that, however embarrassing it might be, their secret was out, and they had the hearty good wishes of their loyal Manchester friends. Truly a romantic wedding-day !

CHAPTER II

THE ROBERTSONS

THE dramatic art of Mrs. Kendal has of course been perfected by incessant study and years of enthusiastic work, but her genius was undoubtedly inherited. Among the honoured names that contribute to the history of the English stage, that of Robertson will ever hold a foremost place. At the time when David Garrick made his first appearance in London Mrs. Kendal's ancestor, James Robertson (often mentioned in the amusing *Memoirs of Tate Wilkinson*) was a highly esteemed actor and dramatic author, and from his day to the present the family traditions have not only been honourably continued but constantly developed and right worthily held up. James Robertson lived in the stormy days of the drama. While he was worthily working in York (which was his stronghold) and elsewhere, Roger Kemble—the son of an actor who,

in the days of Charles II., had played with Betterton (that grand old tragedian who at the age of threescore and ten said that he was only just beginning to learn his difficult art!)—Roger Kemble and his wife were travelling from town to town and village to village after the manner and under the disadvantages and difficulties of the time—at some places being received with gracious favour and at others treated like lepers and threatened with the stocks and whipping at the cart's tail, according as the great people were liberal-minded or puritanical. Yet this sorely tried couple were the parents of John Philip Kemble, of Charles Kemble, and of the still more famous Mrs. Siddons; and James Robertson, who must have had his full share of the bitter theatrical experiences of his contemporary, Roger Kemble, was the ancestor of T. W. Robertson (the author of "Caste") and of Mrs. Kendal, whose name will ever live with those of the great artists who, step by step and with unflagging determination, have caused the once despised English drama to rank side by side with its sister fine arts, of which she was too long, and most cruelly, accounted the Cinderella.

Unhappily thousands of people exist who persist in judging the events of bygone years

by the light of the opportunities of to-day. Of such stuff are those who maintain that because Shakespeare was the son of a man who traded in the (to their understandings) remote town of Stratford-on-Avon he must have been absolutely uneducated. They will not take the trouble to learn that in the days of Queen Elizabeth the Warwickshire Stratford was quite a notable place, and that our great poet there secured the school chances that, coupled to his industry and unsurpassable genius, made him what he was. In like manner these people look down upon the old strolling or "circuit" days of the players, and inform us that their performances must have been "beneath contempt." Well, their efforts have borne wonderful fruit, and those on the perfected and highly honoured stage of to-day who can claim link with their names must feel proud of and grateful to their forefathers.

They did not go on tour with more or less weak imitations of the latest three-act French-adapted farce, or so-called musical comedy, that had "drawn all London"; they did not "travel" with costly but absolutely unconvincing scenery, and such giant "properties" as fire-engines, steam-rollers, and water-tanks; they

did not make the provincial towns they visited hateful with their sensational and glaringly daubed picture posters. Such things have come into vogue (and have no doubt proved alluring) since the days when provincial playgoers were merely anxious and content to see simply staged but carefully rendered representations of Shakespeare, and the best works of Goldsmith, Sheridan, Colman, Mrs. Centlivre, O'Keefe, and the other old dramatists who tapered down into Sheridan Knowles. Who nowadays would go to see primitive but conscientious performances of such plays as Joseph Addison's "Cato"; Otway's "Venice Preserved"; or Murphy's "Grecian Daughter"? But those who loved the stage in the old days, and perforce had to enjoy what they could get, did it, and, I honestly believe, were all the better for it.

Preposterous and "nailed-up" melodrama no doubt existed then just as it does to-day, and Dickens, to the everlasting delight of all who can enjoy an honest laugh, out of his matchless humour created the immortal (but I venture to think impossible) "circuit" manager, Mr. Vincent Crummles. Crummles has been a life-long delight to me, and I would not part with a line of him or a member of his company,

but he never seems to me quite flesh and blood until he takes that newspaper scrap from his pocket, hands it to Nicholas Nickleby, and says : "Here's another bit. This is from the Notices to Correspondents, this one : 'PHILO DRAMATICUS.—Crummles, the country manager and actor, cannot be more than forty-three or forty-four years of age. Crummles is *not* a Prussian, having been born in Chelsea.'" And then, in reply to Nicholas's remark that it is "an odd paragraph," adds, "Very ; I can't think who puts these things in. *I* didn't." Yes, at that moment of his career I recognise the fact that I have met a similarly perplexed Crummles. I have also encountered the self-constituted stage authority of the Mr. Curdle type, who has "written a pamphlet of sixty-four pages post octavo on the character of the Nurse's deceased husband in 'Romeo and Juliet,' with an inquiry whether he had really been a 'merry man' in his lifetime, or whether it was merely his widow's affectionate partiality that induced her so to report him. He had likewise proved that by altering the received mode of punctuation, any one of Shakespeare's plays could be made quite different, and the sense completely changed ; it is needless to say,

therefore, that he was a great critic, and a very profound and most original thinker." Yes, even to-day we sometimes come face to face with this sort of formidable Shakesperean *savant*.

Thackeray gives us a more tender and, I think, a truer picture of the old circuit days than Dickens, for though he took the humorous side of the manager Bingley and the inimitable Captain Costigan, the "Fotheringay" is drawn from the life. Where is the stage student who has not seen the supremely beautiful and sweet-voiced woman who without any inborn histrionic genius has been so *taught* how to make use of her natural charms, and who has so carefully profited by her teaching that, with the masses, who are carried away by her appearance, she passes for a great actress? When I read about her and her methods I know that I have seen her over and over again. "It was her hand and arm that this magnificent creature most excelled in," says Thackeray, "and somehow you could never see her but through them. They surrounded her. When she folded them over her bosom in resignation; when she dropped them in mute agony, or raised them in superb command; when in sportive gaiety her

hands fluttered and waved before her, like—what shall we say?—like the snowy doves before the chariot of Venus—it was with these arms and hands that she beckoned, repelled, entreated, embraced her admirers.” Certainly we have all seen and been fascinated with a Fotheringay; and those of us who know our “Pendennis,” and the stage, feel that the great novelist never limned a more faithful or touching portrait than that of the crippled actor Bows, who, with knowledge of the art he could not by reason of his infirmity follow, patiently taught her how to make her triumphs. Again Thackeray had his kindly word for even the most preposterous of plays. Of Kotzebue’s now almost forgotten but at one time most popular drama “The Stranger,” in which the Fotheringay made such an irresistible Mrs. Haller, he says: “Those who know the play are aware that the remarks made by the various characters are not valuable in themselves, either for their sound sense, their novelty of observation, or their poetic fancy. Nobody ever talked so. If we meet idiots in life, as will happen, it is a great mercy that they do not use such absurdly fine words. The Stranger’s talk is sham, like the book he reads, and the hair he

wears, and the bank he sits on, and the diamond ring he makes play with—but, in the midst of the balderdash, there runs that reality of love, children, and forgiveness of wrong, which will be listened to wherever it is preached, and sets all the world sympathising.”

This is true of all high-purposed work, and it was with the best dramatic material on which they could lay their hands that the self-respecting Robertsons travelled and made themselves beloved on the old Lincoln circuit. They were an earnest, contented, independent race of men and women, diligent in the study of their art, loving it for its own sake, never afraid of hard work, and taking in it a proper pride. At one time the enterprise must have been a prosperous one, but at the time when for the purposes of this chronicle I take up the history of the Lincoln circuit its palmy days were over. Indeed they were numbered, and no amount of conscientious work could make them lucrative. Every season became worse. Lincoln, Boston, Grantham, Peterborough, Newark, Oundle, Spalding, Wisbech, and other at one time faithful towns, no longer supported the time-honoured and industrious little company. Railways had come into existence and destroyed

the comparative isolation of the small from the larger towns, and local interests became absorbed in the now accessible wonders to be seen in the great world outside the little circle to which they had perforce been accustomed.

In these days of trial the circuit was under the control of the widow of Thomas Robertson, who in his day had achieved fame as actor, author, and painter, but the work was really done by her nephew, William Robertson—the father of Mrs. Kendal—an energetic and artistic manager, as well as a good and very popular actor. In the company he met Margherita Elisabetta Marinus, a lady of German birth who had developed into a charming English *comédienne*. He married her in 1828, and they had a very large family, of whom Thomas William Robertson, the famous dramatist (born at Newark-upon-Trent in 1829), was the eldest; and Margaret Shafto—the Mrs. Kendal of to-day (born at Great Grimsby twenty years later)—was the youngest.

In those days Mrs. Thomas Robertson, who was a lady of pronounced literary attainments, kept a very carefully written diary, in which, while always evincing a noble courage, she continually deplores the badness of the times and

the misfortunes that beset her. For instance, writing at Boston in 1830 she says: "Friday was a fearful night. I have just heard that two vessels were lost in Boston Deep. I hope it is not true. I could not sleep for thinking of our goods. All that we have is on the water in a little barge. Once all was in great danger, for they were driven on shore; but they fortunately got off free from damage;" and again from Oundle: "The theatre has been open four nights, and the business bad. I fear I shall again lose a heavy sum, and if so I think I shall sing, 'Oundle, farewell!'" Later she records: "The great excitement of the week is over, and within a few pounds of last year. Bad enough 'tis true; but I am grateful even as it is. I have sent £20 to Boston, £20 to Newark, and £5 to Wisbech, so there is £45 of debt met. God give me the means, through His mercy, to *pay every one*, and I will *ask no more*."

And so, ever loyally aided by her nephew, this courageous and high-principled woman, whose one ambition was to give wholesome entertainment and to pay her way, toiled on, until the inevitable end came: the hardworking little company was disbanded, and, yielding to altered circumstances, the historical Lincoln

circuit became a thing of the past. For its management under the Robertsons both Dickens and Thackeray would have had nothing but hearty sympathy and true admiration.

Such famous actors as Chippendale and Compton were members of the Robertson circuit companies, and when years later Madge Robertson joined them under the Buckstone *régime* at the Haymarket, they used to call her "The Daughter of the Regiment."

In Macready's valuable diary we get a glimpse of William Robertson, and learn something of the trials of the Lincoln days. Writing of his engagement at Louth in 1834 the great actor says: "When I was ready to go on the stage" (he was to open as Virginius) "Mr. Robertson appeared with a face full of dismay; he began to apologise, and I guessed the remainder. 'Bad house?' 'Bad, sir! there's no one!' 'What, nobody at all?' 'Not a soul, sir, except the Warden's party in the boxes.' 'What the devil! Not one person in the pit or gallery?' 'Oh yes; there are one or two.' 'Are there five?' 'Oh yes, five.' 'Then go on; we have no right to give ourselves airs if the people do not choose to come and see us; go on at once!' Mr. Robertson was astonished

at what he thought my philosophy, being accustomed, as he said, to be 'blown up' by his *stars* when the houses were bad."

I have in my possession a manuscript from the pen of William Robertson which has never yet seen the light, and which he entitled "The Actor's Social Position." Seeing how much this question has been discussed, written about, and talked about, until it has been finally settled for all time that cultured actors and actresses can take their places side by side with the poets, authors, artists, and sculptors of their day, and when they are so much courted in the highest ranks of society that they run the risk of neglecting their own work, it is surely worth while to see what this diligent and earnest actor-manager of the old circuit days had to say on the subject.

"The most painful penalty of an actor's social position," he writes, "results in its isolation from every community of interest with others that forms and cements the elements of mutual protection. He stands *alone* in the world—a solitary abstraction—an undefined, unrecognised, disregarded alien, amidst a host of worldly-minded sects, classes, and combinations that, knowing the advantage of union, are linked,

fortified, and impregnable in the iron-clad armour of self-love. All the social hypocrites in society make him their moral target; his character may be traduced—without being known—by any vulgar, low-bred defamer, and his professional attainments tarnished without any consistent analysis, by all the young aspirants after literary distinction who, while fledglings, whet their beaks and try their wings as dramatic critics before they become universal and worthy exponents of art, science, and literature. They little know how many actors' positions are placed in peril because they must point a period, or think of the salaries that are reduced because they must wing a metaphor up to the seventh heaven of sublimity. The play-going public must be all born critics, from the sixpenny sweep in the gallery to the sapient cynic in the side-boxes, for they know our art better by intuition than we do by study—just as children know how to regulate the works of a watch better than the mechanic who made it. They are all infallible; they are only coarse because they must be candid; sceptical because their thoughts are very original; personal because they have a great public duty to perform; and irresponsible because they are

anonymous. If the actor escapes mutilation from his too candid friends he has still to meet other most unscrupulous opponents, who represent the head and heel of the rival religious factions. Forgetting their mutual asperities, over us they join hands; and what we have most to deplore is that an antipathy to the stage is shared by many well-intentioned but unreflective persons who are most kind, humane, and generous upon all other points, but who still manifest the most stubborn and inveterate feeling upon this. A prejudice that is often cultivated by our parents in early life seldom yields to the chastening spirit of refined and liberal opinions afterwards; unhappily it grows with our growth, and strengthens as we mature. Acting and the acts of actors are equally open to uncharitable construction; the vacant, wide-mouthed gossipers who float on the surface of society unthinkingly encourage groundless rumours and petty scandals against all associated with an unprotected art, nor think that if a scrutiny that extends from your public conduct to your private affairs, with a view to depreciate *both*, was applied to any other class, it would produce still more startling results.

“ Now the question for our consideration is, Are these evils the necessary result of an actor’s social position, or are they of our own creating? Do they not arise from a most censurable and wanton disregard to our right standard and proper elevation? We seem never to seek to raise *ourselves*, or wish to exist except in a form that is degrading and contemptible. We are ‘pigeon-livered, and lack gall’ to show even the animal instinct of self-preservation, or the vital energy to strive to escape from this moral thralldom. If we look around us we see in every department of life that its greatest benefits are the result of combination. Then why cannot we combine? What would have been the state of Law, Physic, or Divinity if they had not their schools of examination? What degradation would not yet cling to our grandest institutions if they had not for their standard an organised system of induction? Now is the time when we should make an effort for the like advantages! Now when education is heralding more just and enlightened perceptions, and has established fresh conditions as society’s safeguard, in which we participate. In my early days a company of actors never entered a town but there appeared posted on every wall large

placards denouncing our pursuit, and the pulpits of almost every creed poured forth their anathemas against us. All licenses were granted under a protest, and in the old days of the Whig and Tory struggles no actor could draw the least patronage who was not orthodox, and inoculated with the small-pox of loyalty to the backbone. To-day attacks upon the drama proceeding from men of station are much modified; though its enemies are just as inveterate, because we now receive a very genuine amount of support and kindly regard from many whose minds are free from intolerance. I have observed that ever since the Chancellor of the Exchequer (himself at the head of the High Church religious party), when presenting the Kean testimonial, reiterated the opinion of Lord Bacon, 'that a nation's art was its most truthful history,' and that 'the drama was the precursor of civilisation,' our most unappeasable adversaries have changed their tactics. Their new position was well explained by Mr. Granville when he observed that the morality of the drama was more discussed in Bristol than we (the actors) were aware, and told an anecdote of a clerical gentleman who said he saw no error in a play and should like to see one

represented; but it was impossible, as he had a conscientious conviction against the moral character of its representatives. This gentleman is the type of hundreds, and this opinion is the last invented 'Great Armstrong Gun' of our enemies. The stage is commendable; but the actors are corrupt. The poison is no longer in the pill, but in the hand that administers it! They rather like the honey, but the bees must be smothered. I well remember some thirty years ago how five clergymen at Devonport, near Plymouth, petitioned the magistrates not to grant a license to the theatre, one of the arguments they advanced to justify a refusal being that if an actor constantly represented a villainous character he must become imbued with the sentiments he repeatedly expressed, and that as a matter of consequence his own nature must become identical with the parts he was in the habit of embodying. This system of reasoning they 'proved' by declaring that Dante carried all Pandemonium in his bosom, and that Milton was the devil! Sheridan Knowles was then the 'star' at Plymouth, and he gave these five Wise Men of the West 'a frightful castigation.'

"Now all true actors have a steadfast, en-

during, and deep respect for learning and ability even if evinced by those who condemn them. We never point out that the Evangelical preacher is an actor like ourselves, but in a different arena ; that he uses acting, emphasis, and gesticulation ; that he appeals to feeling, impulse, and imagination—and often establishes his reputation by the use of the art he condemns. We fully realise the high prerogative and supremacy of the Church as the first great source of moral instruction, and we cheerfully surrender our theatres at every call to extend its influence, being aware that as a minor institution our course of instruction will succeed in the same place, with the same object, to the same end, and I cannot but think with more powerful means ; for on the stage example is added to precept, and a multitude of illustrations supply the place of one. We represent to the eye and the heart what the pulpit can only address to the drum of the ear. We portray what they can only describe. We present the cause and its consequences ; the bane and its antidote ; the progress of individual history ; the temptation, the crime, the punishment, the death. No other system can excel that which gives identity to what is ideal, and vitality to all that is lifeless.”

So much for what the earnest and ill-rewarded William Robertson said, wrote, and thought in the days of long ago. Happily he lived to see his eldest son the most cultured and prosperous dramatist of his day; his youngest daughter one of the most brilliant actresses that have graced the English stage; and the actor's social position greatly changed. Were he alive to-day he would have the intense satisfaction of knowing that the art he loved so well takes its proper and highly honoured place among the other high professions. He would probably be the first to acknowledge too that, like all great changes, this one is not altogether an unmingled blessing. To the tyro it seems as easy as it is attractive to become an actor, and absolutely delightful to be courted and welcomed as one in society. The consequence is that numbers of incompetent people, devoid of real aptitude for acting, who would certainly break down over any test examination, but who have just brains enough to commit a part to memory and in parrot-like fashion repeat it, rush to the stage. Unhappily it often happens nowadays that those who have money, interest, and, sometimes, title crowd out those who have the real dramatic fire within them, but who are without influence or

means, and are, consequently, more or less friendless. Like the poet, the true actor is born not made, and again like the poet he may often fail to come to the front for lack of a Mæcenas.

CHAPTER III

MARGARET SHAFTO ROBERTSON

WHEN the Lincoln circuit broke up William Robertson tried his fortune in London, and in the early "fifties" we find him in partnership with Mr. J. W. Wallack managing the Marylebone Theatre. This playhouse, which in later years lost some of its prestige, was then in high repute. It had recently passed from the hands of Mrs. Warner (*née* Huddart), the accomplished and charming actress concerning whom Charles Dickens was wont to be enthusiastic. Mrs. Warner, who had been playing with the famous company of Samuel Phelps, had opened the Marylebone, hoping to gain in a western suburb the same reputation for legitimacy which had followed the experiment of that enthusiastic actor at Sadler's Wells. She made a succession of artistic successes, and her revival of Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady,"

through an adaptation furnished by Mr. J. D. Serle, lives in stage history. "The comedy," says Dr. Westland Marston, "was put upon the stage with a sumptuous taste and correctness which Macready himself as a manager could not have exceeded;" but after a time the double cares of acting and management proved too much for her delicate constitution, and she abandoned her enterprise.

But she left the Marylebone with a valuable name, and I mention her connection with it to show that when it fell into the hands of William Robertson and J. W. Wallack it was a theatre of renown. That they fully maintained the "Warner" traditions is evinced by the fact that in writing of their management an eminent critic of those days said: "It may be asserted without reserve that there is not a more respectably managed theatre in London than the Marylebone Theatre under the present management; that at few theatres in London can pieces comprising a greater number of characters be more adequately represented; and that the inhabitants of St. John's Wood who travel elsewhere for an evening's amusement may possibly 'go further and fare worse.'"

From the first William Robertson's eldest and

gifted son, T. W. Robertson, was, both as writer and actor, connected with the venture, and little Miss Margaret—or “Madge,” as she soon came to be called—was quickly pressed into the service. As she was little more than a baby at the time, she can, of course, remember nothing of these early appearances, which were no doubt occasioned by the fact that the manager’s dainty and intelligent little daughter was available for pieces in which the presence of a tiny child was necessary. As to the first appearance of all—which is ever a matter of interest in connection with an artist who has achieved world-wide celebrity—some doubt has been expressed, but I believe the matter has been set right by a devout collector of old playbills, and an authority on things theatrical, who says: “The Marylebone bill for Monday, February 20, 1854, was ‘The Orphan of the Frozen Sea’; and in this ‘Marie, a child,’ was represented by ‘Miss Robertson.’ This was that very young lady’s first appearance on the London, and, indeed, on any stage. She was then of such tender years that it was not easy, until this bill was adduced in evidence, to convince the Mrs. Kendal of a later day that she had ever made this *début* at all.” Then a Robertson family

story records the fact that when "The Stranger" was being performed, and little Madge, very proud of her new costume, was sent on to the stage to soften the heart of Kotzebue's sorely depressed (and depressing) hero, she caught sight of her nurse in the pit, and, forgetful of the footlight barrier that divided them, gleefully called out, "Oh! nurse, look at my new shoes!"

Mrs. Kendal herself remembers that about this time, being taken to the theatre to see a play in which the plot hinged upon a theft of silver, and hearing her sister (who was acting) unjustly accused, she indignantly called out from the boxes, "My sister did *not* steal the spoons!" A playbill shows that on March 26, 1855, she appeared as "Jeannie, a blind child," in "The Seven Poor Travellers." At the age of six she was seen at the Bristol Theatre as Eva in a stage version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and in the course of the part sang so sweetly that it became a great question to her parents whether she should not be brought up for concert, oratorio, and the lyric stage; but fortunately for the lovers of the art of acting this idea was ultimately abandoned. But, whatever her future was to be, the time had now come when Miss



Photo by

MRS. KENDAL, 1886.

Barrault.

Madge's education must be taken seriously in hand, and for some time she disappeared from the stage, it being understood that music was to take an important place in her studies. That Mrs. Kendal has always retained and cultivated her beautiful singing voice was never better understood than by those who were fortunate enough to be present at her delightful entertainments given at the literary and musical institutes of the English provincial centres during the early part of the present year.

Except that she proved herself a remarkably apt, intelligent, and (best of all !) retentive pupil, there is nothing important to record of the young lady's schooldays. When they were over she became a member of Mr. Chute's famous companies at the Bristol and Bath Theatres, then the most perfect of theatrical training schools. Among those who before or about this time graduated in them were George Melville, Arthur Stirling, George and William Rignold, W. H. Vernon, David James, Charles Coghlan, Arthur Wood, John Rouse, F. J. Cathcart, Miss Marie Wilton (Lady Bancroft), Miss Henrietta Hodson (Mrs. Labouchere), Miss Kate Terry, Miss Ellen Terry, and a host of others who have helped to elevate the English stage to its present proud

position. Among the "stars" who, according to the custom of those days, from time to time visited them, and who they had to support, were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Madame Vestris, Charles Mathews, Benjamin Webster, Madame Celeste, Miss Cushman, Samuel Phelps, Charles Dillon, and G. V. Brooke. Acting all sorts of parts—in burlesque, farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, and even pantomime (there is the record of the sweetest of Cinderellas!)—in such company as this, it is not surprising that Madge Robertson perfected herself in the art in which she was born to excel.

In 1862 the Bath Theatre was destroyed by fire, but, thanks to public spirit, was speedily rebuilt, and on Wednesday, March 3, 1863, a brilliant audience assembled at its reopening to witness a notable revival of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." A bill of the play recording this important event tells me that William Robertson was the Egeus; George Rignold the Theseus; William Rignold the Lysander; Charles Coghlan the Demetrius; Arthur Wood the Athenian weaver, Bottom; Miss Louisa Thorne the Hippolyta; Miss Desborough the Hermia; Miss Henrietta Hodson the Oberon; Miss Ellen Terry the Titania; and Miss Madge

Robertson a singing fairy. In the farce—"Marriage at any Price"—which, in accordance with the custom of those days, followed the main attraction of the evening, Miss Robertson played with William Rignold, Arthur Wood, Miss Henrietta Hodson, and Miss Louisa Thorne. Thus on the same night, on an important occasion, and at a very early age, she appeared, and triumphed, both as songstress and actress. By this time keen managerial eyes were turned upon this accomplished, versatile, and charming young lady, and it was decided that she should accept a flattering offer to play leading parts at Bradford. That this was sound policy soon became apparent. John Baldwin Buckstone, of the historic Haymarket Theatre, had at that time an interest in the Bradford playhouse, and he at once saw that the sweet young lady who had won such well-deserved honours at Bath and Bristol was just the attraction that he wanted for his metropolitan stage. And so at an almost unheard-of age Madge Robertson achieved the provincial actor's ambition and had "her chance in London."

But it cannot be said that her first chance was a good one. The Haymarket Theatre had been taken for a summer season by Mr. Walter

Montgomery, a well-graced actor, who was exceedingly and deservedly popular in the provinces, but who somehow failed to win the approval of some of the more captious of the London critics. The season opened on July 29, 1865, Miss Robertson playing (to the delight of every one) Ophelia to the Hamlet of the too sanguine actor-manager, and with Mr. James Fernandez, Mr. Henry Marston, and Miss Atkinson in the cast.

To speak of nothing else, the great heat of the dog-days was against the hazardous experiment, and I well remember how one of the writers in the comic papers of the day excused himself from criticising the performance by saying—

“Rather too summery,
Mister Montgomery.”

“Hamlet” was soon succeeded by a revival of “King John,” in which Mr. Montgomery was the King; Mr. Fernandez the Faulconbridge; Miss Atkinson the Constance; and Miss Robertson the Blanch of Spain. Speaking the other day of Mr. Beerbohn Tree’s proposed, and now happily accomplished, revival of this strangely neglected play, one of our leading authorities on the drama truly said: “The one distinguished English

Constances dear to the memory of the old playgoer, but Mrs. Kendal, experienced and powerful as she is to-day, would seem to be an ideal choice."

It is something for the young Blanch of Spain of 1865 to be thus spoken of as the coming Constance of to-day!

In August Mr. Montgomery strengthened his company by the engagement of Mr. Ira Aldridge, a gentleman of "colour" who was then "starring" England as the "African Roscius." For him "Othello" was staged, Mr. Montgomery playing his Iago, Mr. Fernandez his Cassio, the Hon. Lewis Wingfield his Roderigo, and Miss Robertson his Desdemona. I remember seeing Mr. Ira Aldridge as Othello, and I could not get it out of my mind that he was playing the part because he happened to be black, and not because he had any special aptitude for Shakespeare's grandly drawn character. Mrs. Kendal speaks of him as a most courtly gentleman, but she still has unpleasant remembrances of how he used to drag Desdemona about by her hair—a realistic piece of stage business for which he was more than once deservedly hissed. Years afterwards, when she was doing good work with Madame Goldschmidt (the famous Jenny Lind of former

days) at the Royal College of Music, she had a daughter of the African Roscius for a pupil.

Though he may have been disappointed in his London season, Mr. Montgomery was evidently well pleased with his very youthful leading lady, for in the autumn he engaged her for the opening of the new Theatre Royal, Nottingham (a town closely identified with the Robertsons), of which he had undertaken the management. She soon became the idol of the lace capital, and passing from there to Hull she quickly won the hearts of the stalwart and stanch Yorkshiremen. There a newly built theatre was under the management of William Brough, one of the celebrated and witty Brothers Brough, and famous as a burlesque writer; and on the Boxing Night of 1865 we find her appearing as Anne Carew in Tom Taylor's pretty comedy "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing," a part which she played to perfection in the St. James's revival of the same piece many years later.

In proof of the loyalty of her Yorkshire admirers Mrs. Kendal is fond of telling the following little story: She was at the height of her popularity when the great Samuel Phelps came to Hull to fulfil a starring engagement. She played the youthful Julie to his Richelieu, and all went

very well indeed, but when, owing to some little hitch in the company, she was at a few hours' notice called upon to play Lady Macbeth the famous actor objected. "She was far too young for the part," he said, and in all truth she looked it. However, indignant though he was, there was no help for it, and, dressed by her mother for the exacting character, the poor frightened girl went on to play it. She need not have been afraid; she acted remarkably well, and her faithful friends in the pit and gallery applauded her to the echo. Possibly this somewhat nettled Phelps; at all events, when the calls at the ends of the acts came, he, as the "star" of the evening, exercised his prerogative, and, putting tact on one side, went on without her. This so angered the admirers of the popular Lady Macbeth that they absolutely hissed the great London actor. As the evening wore on the ill-feeling increased until an incensed deputation waited upon William Robertson, who, in order to encourage his daughter in her ordeal, was in the theatre, declaring that by not bringing her on with him Phelps had insulted "our Madge," and assuring him if he would only say the word they would "dook un in t' Hoomber." Robertson of course did his utmost to pacify his child's

impulsive following, but though the Humber project was abandoned the amazed Phelps had some difficulty in safely leaving the theatre. Mrs. Kendal always gracefully winds up her anecdote by telling how Phelps, so far from bearing malice over an affair that must have at the time been very mortifying to him, asked her, when she came back to London, to play Lady Teazle to his Sir Peter for his benefit at the Standard Theatre.

Under the management of William Brough it was hardly likely that this popular young lady would escape burlesque, and by and by she was delighting her Hull devotees by her acting, singing and dancing as the gossamer-winged butterfly-fairy Papillonetta in one of that clever writer's brilliant and high-toned extravaganzas. Starring engagements at Liverpool and her Nottingham stronghold followed, and now she began to distinguish herself in such important parts as Pauline Deschappelles, Juliet, and Peg Woffington. Again the eyes of London managers were upon her, and on the Easter Monday of 1867 she appeared at Drury Lane as the heroine of Andrew Halliday's drama "The Great City." That was long before the days of our end-of-the-century stage realism, and the fact that a real

hansom cab, a real horse, and an absolutely convincing driver appeared on the stage caused first a thrill of excitement and then a complete sensation. The patrons of the spectacular melodrama of to-day are more exacting. This was Mrs. Kendal's first and last engagement at the "National Theatre," but in later years she has often figured graciously on its boards for the benefits of her old stage comrades whose lines had not fallen in such pleasant places as her own. But her part in "The Great City" was not worthy of her, and it must have been with a sigh of relief that in the autumn of the same year she became a regular member of Mr. Buckstone's famous company of comedians.

Now by this time Sothern, who as the inimitable Lord Dundreary had taken the town by storm in 1861, was the idol of the theatrical world, and his lucrative engagements at the Haymarket were somewhat altering the policy of that home of pure English comedy. I do not think that Miss Robertson very much enjoyed her appearances with the vivacious Sothern. His immense popularity demanded that he should be the first consideration, and those who acted with him rarely got good chances. In "Our American Cousin" she played Mary

Meredith very sweetly, but by this time Tom Taylor's play had been whittled down to little else but a series of scenes for the all-attractive Dundreary. She was delightful as Ada Ingot in her brother's evergreen adaptation, "David Garrick," but the part, albeit sympathetic, is not a great one, and it already had had many exponents. When, in the provinces, she, with the intense earnestness of a true artiste, played Pauline Deschappelles (she has often told me that it is one of her favourite parts, and she certainly plays it to perfection) to Sothern's Claude Melnotte, she must have suffered acutely. Sothern, who was one of the greatest character delineators of his day, was quite vexed with the fate that compelled him to continually appear as the mirth-moving Dundreary, for he longed to be received as the romantic actor—the ideal stage lover. Managers, with control over him, would probably have held him back, but he was now his own master, and was absolutely determined to appear as the impassioned gardener's son and mock Prince of Como. I was present on the occasion, and for two reasons shall never forget it. Nothing that I have ever seen has surpassed the impression made by Madge Robertson's girlish but truly convincing and fascinating

Pauline ; and nothing more pathetically quaint than the manner in which, as the evening wore on, Sothern handled the part of Claude Melnotte. At that time he was as handsome and well-knit a man as ever lived. He looked and dressed the part perfectly ; he was evidently in downright earnest, and he attacked his work with enthusiasm. But the audience, loving their pet Sothern as they did, expected Dundrearyisms, and presently his intense sense of fun caused him to yield to the situation, and in the scene with Colonel Damas he absolutely let them have them. For a time he persevered with the character, and, indeed, did not relinquish it until a country critic, meaning to be both friendly and complimentary, said that until he had undertaken it no one had quite appreciated its *humour* ! I can still hear the groan with which Sothern told me that this was a “crusher.” He then abandoned Claude Melnotte, but, as we all know, the Pauline was during many years destined to delight thousands and thousands of playgoers. But at the time it must have been a great disappointment to her, for it was hoped that Sothern would score a success, and she had been engaged to play Pauline at the Haymarket.

She then had the opportunity of “creating ”

two new parts with Sothern, but though she added to her quickly growing reputation in both, neither was a play destined for long life. They were "A Wild Goose," a version of a piece called "Rosedale," then very popular in America ; and "A Wife Well Won," which probably had a French origin. In the last named she had the only feminine part, and those who can recall the ephemeral production will remember how sweet she was in it. The fact that she appeared as a young, innocent, and beautiful girl, alone in the company of a somewhat strange set of men, seemed to add to the fascination of her impersonation, and she played in a manner so captivating as to be absolutely irresistible. Sothern always used to speak of it as the most charming piece of acting he had seen. Indeed, though her chances with him were rather poor ones, he had the highest admiration for her genius, and always spoke of her as the first and finest actress of his day.

Of these two ventures Mrs. Kendal has told me two droll little anecdotes. In "A Wild Goose" Sothern, who has been not inaptly described as "a bundle of nerves," had in the last act to shoot some one, and (carrying out the tradition of stage firearms) his pistol one night

failed to "go off." Half mad with dismay and mortification, Sothern rushed at the lady who was to be his victim and slaughtered her *with a penknife!*

When "A Wife Well Won" was being acted Sothern, who at that time was almost painfully thin, lent, out of sheer good nature, a costly, heavily padded silk coat, which he wore in the piece, to another actor—Mr. Sefton—to play a certain scene in. Mr. Sefton, unfortunately, failed to return it at the right moment, and when his turn came poor Sothern had to go on without any coat at all, and display his personally deplored slimness to a laughing house.

Again Sothern determined to appear as the handsome, high-souled, and self-sacrificing lover, and accordingly he commissioned Dr. Westland Marston to write him a new stage version of M. Octave Feuillet's "Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre." In an adaptation of this from his own pen, called "The Romance of a Poor Young Man," he had already experimented; and what (though he always longed to excel in them) this whimsical creature really thought of these ultra-romantic stage-lovers is proved by the fact that while in his pre-Dundreary American days he was playing his own serious piece, he would

from time to time appear in what he called the "farcical tragedy" of "The Romance of a very Poor Young Oysterman."

"A Hero of Romance," as Dr. Westland Marston called his work, was produced at the Haymarket in March, 1868. Sothorn delighted in his part of Victor de Tourville, and Miss Robertson sustained the character of the sometime supercilious heroine, Blanche Dumont, with marked ability, but again it must be said that it was hardly worthy of her.

But before the end of the year she had her chances. For Buckstone's benefit she delighted London as Hypolita in Colley Cibber's "She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not" (her destined husband, Mr. W. H. Kendal playing Don Octavio); and in the autumn she went into the provinces and did splendid work in the old comedies. Of this I shall have more to say in my next chapter.

A month or so later Hull again claimed its favourite, and there she shone in an adaptation by her brother, T. W. Robertson, of De Musset's "On ne Badine pas avec L'Amour," entitled "Passion Flowers."

At this time that most astute of managers, Mr. John Hollingshead, was getting ready to open his handsome new Gaiety Theatre, and

looking about him for the greatest attractions of the day he succeeded in engaging Miss Robertson for his principal actress. And so on December 21, 1868, she appeared there in a three-act adaptation of *L'Escamoteur* entitled "On the Cards," with a cast that included Mr. Alfred Wigan, Mr. Maclean, and Miss Nellie Farren. Though an interesting this was not a particularly strong play, and early in 1869 it was succeeded by T. W. Robertson's five-act play "Dreams," in which she appeared with Mr. Alfred Wigan, Mr. Maclean, Mr. R. Soutar, Mr. John Clayton, Mr. Joseph Eldred, Miss Rachel Sanger, and Mrs. Henry Leigh. According to one eminent authority, she had never been seen to such advantage as in her brother's picture of Lady Clara Vere de Vere. But the Haymarket Theatre could not do without her, and so she was soon beckoned back to her first London home. There (although she long figured in the bills as Miss Madge Robertson) she became Mrs. Kendal, and incontestably took her position as one of the greatest actresses of the century. For her, as we shall presently see, the engagement was one long record of triumphs.

CHAPTER IV

THE HAYMARKET COMPANY

EXCEPT to those who can remember them, it is difficult to describe what the famous Haymarket comedians were to playgoers in the days when the Kendals joined them. Though theatrical competition was already becoming keen, they still took the lead in London, and their annual visits to the chief provincial centres were so many dramatic festivals. Then we saw the grand old Shakespearean and other fine English comedies, "As You Like it," "Twelfth Night," "She Stoops to Conquer," "The School for Scandal," "The Rivals," "The Heir-at-Law," "The Country Girl," "The Poor Gentleman," and the rest of them, acted to perfection. There was no striving after elaborate scenic effect; but the costumes were not only correct but worn by people as if "to the manner born"; such artists as Buckstone, the Chippendales,

Howe, Compton, Braid, Rogers, Clarke, and their loyal comrades not only unselfishly played into each others' hands, but by careful study and enthusiasm for their art were complete masters of the "traditions" of their parts. Indeed it was a theatrical combination such as, perhaps, is only to be seen now at the Théâtre Français.

The other day I was talking to a very old theatrical manager who had in his day been a well-known actor. He was not of the class that deplores the "palmy days" of an alleged lost art, who says—

"Bless your heart, sir, I have seen
Kemble and the elder Kean,"

and then flounders in a hopeless sea of reminiscence. Although his hour upon the stage had long ago come and gone, and fortune had not treated him too kindly, he frankly and freely acknowledged that since his day the art of acting has made a forward march never anticipated in his once ambitious day-dreams. He was full of generous praise for the existing state of things, but he became very sad when I asked him about the "traditions" of the old comedies. "They will be lost," he said; "they can no longer

be handed down from generation to generation."

I think he was right. The country stock companies, in which they were not only insisted upon but carefully studied, have died out, and the young actors of to-day (one of them recently told me so) declare them to be "old-fashioned rot, you know." The existing actors who remember them are becoming few and far between, belonging to no consolidated company, but accepting engagements for special parts that seem to suit them in new plays, or now and then in a welcome revival of an old one; but to my sorrow I believe that I shall never again see Sheridan, Goldsmith, and their *confrères* acted as they were in the bygone days of the old Haymarket Company under the Buckstone *régime*.

Well, it does not much matter! The younger folk of to-day do not much care about the "old comedies," and those who fondly linger over memories of them and their traditions will soon be out of the way.

Mrs. Kendal has acknowledged in her own generous and modest way how much she owed to the Haymarket actors, who welcomed her not only for herself, but because they had served under her father on the Lincolnshire circuit,

and at once dubbed her "The Daughter of the Regiment." "These fine veterans," she has told us, "were only too glad to give me all the assistance in their power. When I played in any of the classical parts I always had one of them to tell me that this was the way in which some of my great predecessors in the part had performed it, and so I had the advantage of knowing all the traditions of the stage. I must confess that I believe I get more credit than I deserve for originality; much ought to be put down to these advantages of early training and constant encouragement from these great masters of my art."

Now even by their most devoted chroniclers it must be owned that in the days of 1869 the Haymarket comedians were growing old. Poor Tom Robertson, who never forgot the curt and almost cruel way in which Buckstone had declined his play "Society" (the play that was destined to become the foundation-stone of the Bancrofts' memorable reign at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre), wrote to order for the Haymarket his clever adaptation from the French entitled "Progress." When Robertson read his play to Buckstone the veteran comedian looked aghast and said, "Good Lord, they are all old

people in it!" "Certainly," said Robertson, with a recollection, no doubt, of old snubs and recently brilliant and independent-making successes, "I've written the piece for *your* company."

Tom Robertson never forgot or forgave the hard and disappointing days in which, from theatre to theatre, the unappreciated manuscript of "Society" was hawked about. In his pocket, and the hands of the managers and actors who carelessly read and scornfully rejected it, it became almost worn out, and yet it was the finger-post that pointed to the regeneration of the English stage. Those who appreciated it, however, carefully preserved it, and the other day I saw its once-despised pages, all bound in scarlet morocco and gilt-lettered, enshrined in a glass-case as one of the treasures of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. And there, on the first page, scored through and through by the angry pen of the chagrined author, is Buckstone's summing up of it in the one word "Rubbish!"

But though he proved himself to be a bad judge of this modern play, Buckstone knew all about the old ones, and was himself a dramatist of no mean repute. With the public he was im-

mensely popular. Sothern said of him : " Buckstone must now be about seventy-five years of age ; but, old as he is, he gets hold of his audience more rapidly than any one I know. A simple ' good morning ' from him seems to set the house in a roar. His personal magnetism is simply wonderful. He acts as if he had strings on his fingers attached to the audience in front, and plays with them and pulls them about just as he wants."

It was just at the time that Buckstone and his comrades were accused (as if it were a crime !) of " aging " that Mr. and Mrs. Kendal came to the front and warmed the company into new life. Surrounded by experienced players who were sensible enough (when they realised their capabilities) not to be jealous of handsome and youthful new-comers, the Kendals delighted, —aye, and instructed—successive audiences as Orlando and Rosalind, Charles Surface and Lady Teazle, Jack Absolute and Lydia Languish, Young Marlowe and Kate Hardcastle, and other characters of kindred kind. Especially I recall one unforgettable evening when Bickerstaff's old and now neglected comedy, " The Hypocrite," was given. Mr. Howe appeared as Dr. Cantwell, Mr. Kendal as Colonel Lambert, Mr. Compton

as Mawworm (this was a wonderful performance), and "Miss Madge Robertson" as Charlotte. I, as an old and very constant playgoer, can conscientiously say that I have never seen anything so perfect on the stage. The sweet, vivacious, graceful, and altogether winsome Charlotte of that evening will ever linger in the memories of those who were fortunate enough to witness the impersonation.

Yes, we had abundant dramatic feasts in those days. The comedies were followed or preceded by the famous old farces, in which the leading members of this enthusiastic company did not disdain to take part. Buckstone and Compton—Nasmyth hammers content to show how they could crack nuts—would appear as "Box and Cox"; no one would miss Mr. Chippendale's "Uncle Foozle," or Mr. Compton's deliciously quaint performance in "A Fish out of Water"; Mr. Kendal won hosts of friends by his mercurial light-comedy performances in such characters as Horatio Craven in "His First Champagne" and Jeremy Diddler in "Raising the Wind," and, with his wife, was especially successful in the clever comedietta (formerly associated with the name and fame of Charles Mathews) entitled "How to Make Home Happy." These

actors worked hard in the "sixties," and for far less remuneration than would be expected to-day, but they earned their reward in the unbounded popularity which was substantially evinced at the time, and will live in theatrical history.

Naturally the Kendals made many and great friends among their admiring comrades, but I think their prime favourite was Henry Compton—and no wonder, for he was not only, in his own way, a perfect artist but a warm-hearted and cultured gentleman. After his death, at the request of his sons, Mrs. Kendal jotted down some recollections of him, which my friend Mr. Edward Compton permits me to insert. To use her own words, they are "characteristic of the great actor and true gentleman so much respected, admired, and, indeed, beloved by my husband and myself."

"One of his first appearances on the stage," she continues, "was made at Spalding in Lincolnshire, in my father's company, his 'reward of merit' being at the rate of one pound paid weekly. Though a mere beginner, I have always understood that even at this time he gave abundant promise of future success; while his genial manner and capital

spirits were then, as always, proverbial. Among the many hardships endured by provincial actors of that period was the oft-repeated order to 'march' some thirty miles or so, for the purpose of appearing at night in some adjacent town. On one of these occasions your father, Mr. Chippendale, and my father were companions; but one of the three, either from an accident or a low state of the funds, was only able to face the journey with one shoe. Under these circumstances, and knowing that the journey must be made, there was only one thing to be done, and, to the credit of the profession, be it said, they did it. They stuck by each other—as they always do, as they always have done, and, I hope, always will do—and *took it in turns to walk with a single shoe*, until their destination was reached!

“Many and strange are the tales of ‘stage waits,’ but surely the one so long remembered as a standing joke against your father is worthy of a place among the most peculiar. I refer to that occasion when your father, Mr. Buckstone, and my husband were dining out at Manchester. The piece that evening being ‘The Hypocrite,’ and your father’s presence being unnecessary until the third act, he walked calmly to his

rooms, so that he might enjoy his quiet cup of coffee as usual before proceeding to business. In the meantime the comedy mentioned sped merrily along, and the announcement in the third act, 'Mr Mawworm is below!' found the audience in the very best of humours, as they waited in eager expectation for the appearance of their favourite. The cue, however, was not taken up, and, after the usual hurrying of footsteps and whispering of voices, the mortifying news that 'Mr. Compton was not in the theatre' was made apparent to those assembled by the ringing down of the curtain. A messenger was at once despatched to the absentee's apartments, where he was found, having finished his coffee, comfortably taking the regulation 'forty winks' in his slippers! The first person he encountered on his arrival at the theatre was my husband, to whom he remarked in his quaint, dry manner, 'Well, young Kendal, *you've* done a nice thing!' He then hurried on his costume, and, the curtain being taken up again, he was greeted on his appearance with a reception that can only be described as tremendous.

"Your father's regular habits were pretty well known in the profession, so I was not surprised

when Mr. Kendal and myself were ‘starring’ at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre, Liverpool, to hear of his methodical way of living from my landlady, who was making him comfortable in her other set of rooms, he being at that time with the ‘Vezin-Chippendale Company’ at the Amphitheatre. I determined, however, that we should see as much of each other as possible, since Fate had thrown us so conveniently together, and every night on coming home I would go to his sitting-room and insist on his digesting his frugal supper over a pipe with Mr. Kendal. At the end of the fortnight, when parting from us he said to me, ‘Goodbye, my dear girl. I like you very much; but you have entirely spoilt my constitution, to say nothing of my complexion!’ As your father was turned seventy at the time, this remark was particularly humorous.”

It was in the October of 1869 that Mrs. Kendal had her first great chance of “creating” an important part at the Haymarket, and right worthily she availed herself of it. As usual, there is the little story of managerial prejudice and short-sightedness concerning the new play in which, after tantalising delays to dramatists and actress, she was at last permitted to appear. Like Robertson’s “Society,” “New Men and Old

Acres," by Tom Taylor and A. W. Dubourg, had gone the dreary round of the London theatres only to be rejected until it came to the Haymarket. Happily by this time Buckstone seemed to doubt his own judgment. At all events, he gave it to "Young Kendal" to read, and the keen eye of the "Recruit of the Regiment" at once saw its great possibilities, and he urged his chief to produce it. For a long time it was "pooh-pooh'd," but at last it was tentatively staged for Mrs. Kendal's benefit in Manchester. Oddly enough, there was no part in it calculated to suit Mr. Kendal, but he was quite willing to stand aside and witness the triumph that he felt sure was in store for his wife. The triumph came, and in the October of 1869 the often-disappointed authors met with the reward of their patience in the brilliant success of their comedy at the Haymarket.

The delightful Lilian Vavasour of Mrs. Kendal at once captivated the town. Of the piece and her performance in it one of the keenest and most earnest critics of those days said: "The comedy, though wanting anything like that view of serious interest which can alone take hold of the hearts of an audience, is lively and amusing throughout, while the dialogue, which is gene-

rally clever and pointed, sometimes attains even higher merits. But the acting of Miss Robertson, who sustained the part of Lilian, might alone have sufficed to secure success for a work of far inferior merits. A young lady who talks slang, corrupted by the society of a sporting cousin, would be a dangerous part in ordinary hands ; but Miss Robertson's performance in no part degenerated into anything like vulgarity. There was a neatness and finish not only in her delivery of the words, but in all her movements, including that indefinable filling up of time known to the actors as 'business' which belongs to the very best school of comedy acting. Nor is she much less at home in the more pathetic portions of her part, particularly in the scene in which, in the view of a wealthy *parvenu's* succession to her father's property, she bespeaks his favour and kindness for old objects of her bounty, not forgetting her dog and the peacock with one eye ; and, again, in a later portion in which she freely offers herself, when rich, to the man who loves her, and who had not disdained her when presumptively poor."

"New Men and Old Acres" ran for many nights, but Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were soon playing together again. In Mr. Theyre Smith's

brilliant comedietta, "Uncle's Will," they found one of the brightest little gems in their repertory. Never was the "give and take" of genuinely witty repartee better handled than by these two in a playlet they discovered for themselves, and in which they have delighted thousands and thousands.

In the November of 1870 there came a delightful surprise for the true lovers of dramatic art, for it was then that Mr. W. S. Gilbert commenced his fascinating series of "fairy comedies"—fanciful pieces written in flowing blank verse with wit and satire sparkling in each line—extravaganzas of the type that in former years had been made popular by Planché, where scenery and music, though tastefully introduced, were not predominant, and in which punning and slang had no place—in short, high literary efforts calculated to refine and instruct, as well as amuse, both reader and spectator. The first of these, "The Palace of Truth," was avowedly based upon a story by Madame de Genlis which tells of an enchanted castle the occupants of which are constrained unconsciously to express aloud their thoughts, however unworthy these may be or inconvenient the occasion for giving them utterance. The complications that ensue

are not only instinct with satire but intensely diverting. It at once became evident that Mr. Gilbert had discovered a new vein of precious ore, and it was manifest that in Mr. and Mrs. Kendal he had met the experts able to work it to perfection.

Looking strikingly handsome in the picturesque mediæval costumes allotted to the Princess Zeolide and Prince Philamir, and speaking their lines not only with a true sense of their humour, but an appreciation of the serious meaning they were often intended to convey, both actress and actor made a great and lasting impression. Indeed, there was a freshness and charm about the whole production which to many of us was irresistible, but it takes a long time to induce the rank and file of English folk to acknowledge the merit of a "new departure," and I do not think that "The Palace of Truth" met with the genuine enthusiasm that it deserved. But then it must be remembered those were not the days of phenomenally long runs.

It paved the way, however, for what many critics hold to be Mr. Gilbert's masterpiece, and indeed it is a masterpiece of which any writer might be justly proud. When, in December, 1871, "Pygmalion and Galatea" was produced,

the capabilities of Mrs. Kendal were realised. For many a long day such perfect art in a most subtle character had not been seen, and she held her now smiling, now tearful audience in thrall. The play has lived, and will live, and Mr. Gilbert's beautiful and witty stage version of the old classical fable of the impetuous Athenian sculptor who is punished by the gods for his impious wish that the marble Galatea he has chiselled into a thing of beauty shall be endowed with life, is so well known that it needs no description here.

I have seen many Galateas. They have all been good, and some of them most admirable performances; but not one of them, I venture to think, came within measurable distance of Mrs. Kendal's impersonation. It must be remembered, too, that she "created" the part, and enriched it with all its pretty feminine touches. Those who came after her had the immense advantage of these traditions, duly noted in the prompt book. Who, having seen this peerless Galatea, will forget how beautiful she looked, and how gracefully she wore her classical drapery? But even these things seemed forgotten when a perfectly attuned voice (wedded to just the right facial expression) enunciated

Mr. Gilbert's charming lines. The amazement of the suddenly animated statue was wonderfully conveyed, and the naïveté of her questions to Pygmalion was irresistible. What an expression of pleased innocence came into her eyes as she gazed at her face in the mirror and said—

“How beautiful! I'm very glad to know
That both our tastes agree so perfectly;
Why, my Pygmalion, I did not think
That aught could be more beautiful than thou,
Till I beheld myself. Believe me, love,
I could look in this mirror all day long.
So I'm a woman!”

What delightful and unmistakable simplicity when, in reply to the remorseful Pygmalion's

“It's a grievous sin
To sit as lovingly as we sit now,”

she answers—

“Is sin so pleasant? If to sit and talk,
As we are sitting, be indeed a sin,
Why, I could sin all day!”

I have, alas! seen a Galatea who in order to win a laugh looked archly at her audience as she delivered these lines, as one who would have them understand that “she knew all about it!”

Mrs. Kendal aroused abundant mirth, but it was the merriment created by the amused belief

of her hearers in the animated statue's absolute purity.

How fine, too, was her horror (there was the ring of true tragedy in this) when she shrank from the red-handed Leucippe and gazed piteously on the soft-eyed, still warm fawn he had just killed, and how tender her utterance of the words, as she took the poor little dead thing in her arms—

“Why, you have murdered her !
Poor little thing ! I know not what thou art ;
Thy form is strange to me ; but thou hadst life,
And he has robbed thee of it !”

But I could go on multiplying instances of the extreme delicacy of this subtle and affecting performance, and must content myself with one more—the touching note of heart-wrung bitterness when, at the end of the play, having heard Pygmalion say of her—

“She is not fit to live upon this world ”

she put into the reply—

“Upon this worthy world, thou sayest well,
The woman shall be seen of thee no more.”

Mr. Kendal, of course, had no such chance of distinguishing himself as his wife, but he looked

a perfect picture as the Athenian sculptor of the days of long, long ago; and he played a rather thankless part—thankless because unsympathetic—with great care and finish. It is certain, moreover, that Mrs. Kendal's triumph would not have been so complete if she had not been acting with one who so thoroughly knew her methods, and upon whom she could so completely rely.

“Pygmalion and Galatea” subsequently became as popular in the country as it was in London, and Mrs. Kendal tells an amusing story of what happened during one of its representations in Dublin. An old Irish lady, evidently deeply sympathising with the somewhat ill-treated Galatea, and with an eye of suspicion on Pygmalion and his jealous wife, Cynisca, at the moment when the animated statue was about to throw herself into the sculptor's arms, shouted from her “coign of vantage” in the gallery: “Don't, darlint! His wife has just gone out!” Everybody, including Mrs. Kendal, burst into laughter, and the scene was irretrievably wrecked.

By the way, most actors have good tales to tell of gallery interruptions and remarks, especially in provincial theatres. If the Kendals have few it is because they so absolutely hold their

audiences that such things rarely occur. I have seen them acting to densely, and even uncomfortably crowded houses in rough manufacturing towns where (save for laughter and applause) you might, from rise to fall of curtain, have heard a pin drop.

Probably by this time, and in the direction of fairy comedy, Mr. Gilbert, to use the familiar phrase of to-day, was finding how difficult it is to "beat a record." Certainly "The Wicked World," which was produced in 1873, though containing many good things, was, after "Pygmalion and Galatea," a disappointment. In the cast, too (at least in one case), mistakes were made. The idea of making poor old Buckstone appear as a fairy may have appeared droll in conception, but it did not turn out well. He had a prologue to speak, and on the first night he was received with shouts of merriment. Thus encouraged, he started well, and was speaking the lines in his own curious but popular fashion when he broke down. The infirmities of age were besetting him, and his memory had failed him. He was so deaf that the prompter could do little or nothing to help him, and, after a painful little struggle, he had to leave the remainder of the introductory verse unspoken. In these waning

years of his life the veteran comedian kept his company together because he was so familiar with their gestures and the movements of their mouths that from them he could take his cues. As the Queen Selené of the Wicked World, Mrs. Kendal spoke the long speeches allotted to her with her usual charm and appreciation of their true meaning; and Mr. Kendal in his picturesque suit of early armour made an impressive figure as the Gothic knight, Sir Ethais. Little more than this can be said.

Two clever comediettas which the Kendals made popular in the same year should not pass without mention. They were "His Own Enemy," by Mr. A. Meadow; and a charming duologue by Mr. A. W. Dubourg, entitled "Twenty Minutes' Conversation under an Umbrella," in which, as "Willie" and "Madge," Mr. and Mrs. Kendal exchanged their clever if rather virulent repartee in the delightful manner of "Uncle's Will."

In 1874 Mr. Gilbert abandoned the dainty blank verse of his fairy plays for trenchant prose, and in the early days of the year the Haymarket Company appeared in his four-act play, "Charity," a work that hardly met with its deserts, and which should surely be revived in these days

when, I think, it would be better understood. As was felt at the time, a vein of clever but rather cruel cynicism pervades the dialogue, and extends to the characters, who, however, were found to be, one and all, singularly fresh and unstagey. Mr. Kendal had the courage to appear in a terribly thankless part, one of those characters that an actor knows beforehand to be "dead against the audience"; but he had his reward in seeing his wife secure, at the end of the trying and difficult third act, a "triumph more spontaneous and overwhelming" (I quote from one of our most eminent critics) "than has often been accorded an artist. The audience literally rose to greet her." Indeed, as the unfortunate Mrs. Van Brugh she exhibited deeper qualities than she had been given credit for, and she made the success of a play that (in 1874) was too unsympathetic in tone to secure a very long run. Those were the ante "stage problem" days!

It was in 1874 that Mr. G. W. Godfrey, whose name was ultimately associated with "The Queen's Shilling," "The Parvenu," and other great stage successes, was fortunate enough to place his first piece in the discriminating hands of Mr. Kendal. Acting upon his advice, Buck-

stone produced it. "Queen Mab," as it was called, was a pretty and clever rather than a strong play. It pleased all who saw it, but it contained no great acting chances for Buckstone, the Kendals, or the other members (Compton had already left it) of the Haymarket Company, and it did not live long.

Indeed at about this time a spell of ill luck seemed to have settled over the historic "little theatre in the Haymarket," as, following their fathers, the older playgoers of those days still fondly called it, and "Mont Blanc," by Henry and Athol Mayhew, which was the next venture, was a complete failure. This was an invertebrate version of the well-known and diverting French play, "Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon." The genial and versatile Max O'Rell (M. Paul Blouet) has quite recently shown us what can be done with a really well-handled and well-acted adaptation of the clever original work.

It was after this *fiasco* that Buckstone sought counsel of his comrades, and opened the proceedings by stating in a sad and solemn voice that he knew the cause of their recent misfortunes, and that they could easily be set right if only they could get "a play that would draw."

That play never came. How rarely it does come! For his benefit in the August of 1874 the brave old actor-manager produced a three-act comedy by Mr. Robert Buchanan dealing with the tempting Cavalier and Roundhead Period, entitled "A Madcap Prince." In it he played with sufficient unction, the part of a Puritan soldier, known as Light-o'-the-Land Sawdon, but it was becoming evident that his stage days were numbered. In this production Mr. Kendal once more had the poorest of chances; but of Mrs. Kendal's performance of Elinor Vane, who in order to ensure the safety of King Charles II. is induced to masquerade as his Majesty's "double" and in his Majesty's garb, it is recorded that there were few living actresses who could give so clever a mixture of sauciness and *espièglerie*, and could blend with it so much that was genuine and womanly. Her manner of wearing her disguise was excellent, and her identity was scarcely recognisable behind it.

And then came one of those sad periods (alas! they are always coming) when we have to recognise that

"Good Times and Bad Times and All times Get Over."

The days of the Buckstone *régime* at the Hay-

market were at an end, and there came a night when the green baize curtain fell upon it for the last time, leaving only bare walls behind it to echo back sweet yet sad memories to those who cared to call for them.

CHAPTER V

"ON THE WING"

WHEN the Haymarket Company broke up the Kendals wisely determined to tempt fortune on their own account, and amongst those who strongly advised them to adopt this course was the late Mr. James Rodgers, then lessee and manager of the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham. James Rodgers was a man with a very interesting personality. He was a sound actor of the old school, and if he had not actually acted with Edmund Kean, he knew all about him, and was absolutely steeped in the traditions of his day. He had been one of Charles Kean's leading lieutenants during his memorable management of the Princess's Theatre ; and he had a remarkably keen eye for the thing that would attract the public. He had been intimate with the elder Robertsons—he was watching the career of "Madge Robertson" with true interest and appreciation, and

long before the days of "Galatea" he had seen in her the coming great actress of her day. Indeed he was closely connected with that brief occupation of the Haymarket by Mr. Walter Montgomery to which I have alluded, and it was to him that next "stepping-stone" engagement was due.

Having full confidence in their drawing powers, he right gladly—directly he knew they were free—begged the Kendals to accept a "starring" engagement at his theatre, and they determined to make the venture. In those days the provincial stock companies were still in existence, and the "stars" had to be content with such support as they could get from the local actors and actresses. To tell the truth, the "stock" at the Birmingham Prince of Wales Theatre in the days of 1874 was not of the strongest, and in order to make it palatable a great deal of flavouring and good cookery were required. All the more credit, then, is due to the Kendals for the complete success of their engagement, and that they at once "drew" a town too apt to look askance at new theatrical attempts. I must give here a copy of the handbill that was issued announcing the new departure.



PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE
BROAD STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

ENGAGEMENT

OF

MISS MADGE ROBERTSON

AND

MR. W. H. KENDAL

(Of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket),

FOR SIX NIGHTS ONLY! Commencing Monday
Evening, November 16, 1874,

WHO WILL APPEAR IN THE FOLLOWING PIECES:

ROMEO AND JULIET. LADY OF LYONS.

THE HUNCHBACK.

AS YOU LIKE IT. EAST LYNNE.

ALSO THE ENORMOUSLY SUCCESSFUL COMEDIETTA OF

UNCLE'S WILL

*Played by Miss ROBERTSON and Mr. KENDAL over 300 Nights at the
Theatre Royal, Haymarket.*

~~~~~  
FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 20th,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

MISS MADGE ROBERTSON & MR. W. H. KENDAL,

On which occasion will be produced, for the first time, an entirely  
new and original Comedietta, by

**T. E. PEMBERTON,**

written expressly for Miss Robertson and Mr. Kendal, entitled

**WEEDS.**

Box Office now Open.

It will be seen that the energetic and enthusiastic young couple did not mean to shirk work. It is difficult to imagine what it must have been to rehearse and act those five "heavy" plays, partly unfamiliar to them, with a company wholly strange to them, and with a smoothness and success that could only command complimentary criticism. How well I remember calling upon my friends one morning after a performance of "Romeo and Juliet." In their own stock days "stage falls" came as a matter of course, but in the Haymarket comedies they had small part, and they had become unused to them. But they had impersonated the luckless scions of the ridiculously aggravating Montagues and Capulets conscientiously, and hence I found them complaining of sore bruises, and surrounded by an aroma suggestive of vinegar and brown paper! But it was a colossal week! On the Saturday evening a "Grand Monstre Programme" was announced, and the Kendals actually supplemented Sir Thomas Clifford and Julia in "The Beautiful Play" (I quote from the playbill) of the "Hunchback," by Sheridan Knowles, by an admirable performance of Claude Melnotte and Pauline Deschappelles in Lord Lytton's "Favourite Play" — the "Lady of





*Photo by*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "WILLIAM AND SUSAN."

*[Elliott & Fry.]*

70 MINU  
AIRBORNE LIAISON

Lyons." And yet on the Sunday they were quite fresh and cheery, and eager to woo fortune in their next town.

The week was not without its incidents, and one of them was droll. For "Romeo and Juliet"—and in order to do honour to the occasion—James Rodgers, who was already well advanced in years (happily for those who knew and appreciated him he lived to a ripe old age), and had practically retired from the stage, resolved to appear as Mercutio, and if he did not quite look the part played it with a verve and finish that should make the nonchalant semi-amateur actor of to-day blush. Later in the week Mr. Kendal, who was always properly fastidious concerning the setting of the stage, complained about the absence of "upholstery." He was told that the resources of the establishment had been exhausted, but in his usual quiet and determined way he insisted that his remonstrance should be reported to the management. In the evening the stage was certainly brighter, and silk, satin, and velvet, adorned the furniture. Mr. Kendal thanked Mr. Rodgers for the improvement, and not without a touch of irony the old actor said: "Yes, I have had my Mercutio costume cut up to help you make your effects!"

A touching episode is associated in my mind with the production of "East Lynne." Those who are familiar with that extraordinarily popular play (I believe that many fortunes have been made out of it) will remember that the (to some of us) objectionable "stage child" is always in evidence. Mr. Kendal had, in face of the audience, to kiss one of these objectionable little people, and, noticing that the poor mite cast for the part had a pitiable eruption about the mouth, he resolutely, but certainly not unreasonably, asked for a substitute. There was no difficulty about *that*, but Mrs. Kendal's woman's heart and characteristic "quickness" saw tears gather in the little thing's eyes, and knew that it (probably it was the offspring of the stage carpenter or the gasman) would have the heartache if it did not appear. Accordingly she took some of the most good-natured of the members of the stock company into her confidence, and when the "drop" fell on one of the acts they went through the little scene in which the child had to be seen, and sent it home happy in the belief that a first successful appearance had been made "before the public."

I have another little story to tell concerning Mrs. Kendal and "East Lynne." It will be

remembered how the hapless Lady Isabel, in the disguise of Madame Vine, returns to her husband's home, and while posing as his governess nurses her own child on its bed of sore sickness. In a Yorkshire town, soon after the death of her first child, Mrs. Kendal was playing this part when the memory of another tiny bed and another piteous little face affected her so strongly that she momentarily broke down with real emotion. Whether the audience thought it was “ acting ” or not I cannot say, but it certainly made its mark, for a woman (no doubt a mother herself) stood up in the pit, and with tears coursing down her face, cried out “ No more ! No more ! ” I believe that I am right in saying that after that sad experience Mrs. Kendal declined to play the part again. Now that kindly time has filmed over her wound she can tell the story, and even, in her own delightful way, put a little grain of humour into it, for she can remember that while her heart was wrung with real anguish the little Yorkshire child said, in the parrot-like fashion in which it had been taught, “ A' cannot see you or eear your voice. A' can ownly eear the singin' of those voices in the shinin' garden. Theear ! Theear ! ”

Those who have glanced at the reprinted handbill of this engagement will see that the week's programme included the production of a comedietta from the pen of a namesake of mine, entitled "Weeds." In it Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played so admirably that its success was a thing assured. Not long ago I told this Mr. Pemberton that, having been fortunate enough to secure such a wonderful start, it seemed a pity that he had not made more enduring success as a dramatist. In reply he referred to the story told in the German ballad called "Schön-Rohtraut"—the story of the King's daughter who would neither spin nor sew, but who fished and hunted and rode on horseback through the woods, with her father's page for her only companion. Of course the poor lad fell in love with his sweet young mistress; and one day, as they rested themselves under a great oak, the merry Schön-Rohtraut laughed aloud at her woe-stricken companion, and cried, "Why do you look at me so lovingly? If you have the heart to do it, come and kiss me, then!"

Whereupon the lad, with a terrible inward tremor probably, went up and kissed Schön-Rohtraut's laughing lips. And they two rode quietly home; but the page joyously said to

himself, “I do not care now whether she were to be made Empress to-day, for all the leaves of the forest know that I have kissed Schön-Rohtraut’s mouth.” And my namesake—and I know he spoke from his heart—said that of his little play called “Weeds” he felt very much like the page of this quaint old legend. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal had been applauded and praised in a something that he had written, and he had achieved more than he had a right to expect. Mentally he had kissed Schön-Rohtraut’s lips, and the memory of it would, whatever might betide, cling to him for many a long day.

In connection with “Weeds” there is a little story to tell. The trifle was so called because its principal character was that of a young widow, and this part was of course taken by Mrs. Kendal. During the week she went into one of those ghastly (but no doubt profitable) emporiums where “mourning is supplied on the shortest notice,” to select a widow’s cap, and the writer of the piece went with her. While she (of course her popular face was familiar to every one) was making her purchase, he noticed a look of surprised horror on the faces of the staring attendants, and presently

the proprietor of the establishment came to him and said, "It must have been very sudden, sir! I saw him acting last night! How wonderfully she bears it!" *They all thought that Mr. Kendal was dead, and that she was selecting a tribute to his memory!*

Happily that illusion was soon dispelled, and the week that had been regarded as an experimental one was a triumph. In the robust, manly, and poetical characters that he was called upon to play Mr. Kendal seemed to portray

"Courtliness, and the desire of fame  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man";

and in Mrs. Kendal the crowded houses discovered and never forgot that mysterious "something" which brings an actor or actress into immediate sympathy with an audience. Of that indefinable "something" (some people call it "magnetism") she has truly said: "If it were easy of definition, it might be easy of acquirement, but it is neither the one nor the other, and the only thing we can say is that the man or woman who does not possess this peculiar quality is never likely to exercise a great hold on the public, even though he or



she may be, in every other respect, a very admirable artist. The dramatic instinct and the subtle human sympathy which brings one into touch with the feelings of one's fellow-creatures cannot be acquired either by study or perseverance; and if these are among the inner secrets of success—as I have a shrewd suspicion they are—then it will be seen why there is no royal road to dramatic fame. Many actors, however, have attained a certain measure of popularity on account of the public being told they were great actors until it began to believe; but unless an actor has the necessary 'staying-power,' unless he possesses this mysterious 'something,' no amount of critical laudation can ever serve to retain a popularity which may have been so earned, as the public is wonderfully correct in its judgments, and the public is the actor's first and final court of appeal.

"As I have said, a man or woman may be a very good artist and yet lack this indefinable quality which makes for success or greatness. It is a common thing to see very finished actors never rising beyond second- or third-rate parts, while others of far less artistic finish climb to the very front and draw the public to see them in every new part they may

assume. The one class lacks that sympathetic nature which is the other's chief endowment, and while the public sits unmoved, but admiring, at the performance of the one, it is roused to enthusiasm at the impersonations of the other. The answer, then, to the question, What is the secret of dramatic success? would seem to be: Be born with this peculiar charm and you will be able to awaken the sympathies of your audience. And as no actor ever became great who had not the power to move the hearts of others, no study or perseverance can make up for this gift where Mother Nature has not been indulgent. Of course devotion to one's art and arduous practice can make a man or a woman a good artist even when this great gift has been denied; but if one studies the characteristics of our great actors, past or present, one will find that their distinguishing feature is the degree in which they have possessed or do possess this indescribable something which is very inadequately defined by some people as 'personality.'"

Yes, in the days of 1874—long, long before she realised her own power—we saw and appreciated that "indescribable something" in Mrs. Kendal.

Mr. James Rodgers was very proud of the great success of what he was afterwards wont to call the first real "Kendal Week" at his Birmingham Theatre, and from that moment he and they became staunch friends. In after years it became a great delight to me to sit at his hospitable table with my friends, and to hear the old actor fight his (stage) battles "o'er again." Of course the Kendals could not remember all that he could conjure up, but by hearsay they knew much about the past, and their questions and suggestions struck a veritable mine of theatrical lore. Under the roof of James Rodgers, indeed, I have met Henry Irving, J. L. Toole, John Hare, Lionel Brough, W. H. Vernon, Madame Ristori, Miss Genevieve Ward, Madame Modjeska, and other leading lights of the stage, and it was pleasant to see how one and all appreciated their courtly host, and liked to hear his memories of bygone days.

In all ways he was a most interesting man and the truest of friends; but I think he lacked a sense of humour. Be that as it may, I know that he commissioned the author of "Weeds" to write him a pantomime, especially insisting on the stipulation that it must be a "comic"

pantomime. When it was finished the anxious young dramatist read it to him, but from start to finish the manager gave neither sign nor sound. When at last the manuscript was laid on his table he said, "Yes, yes, I pass it. It will do very well, but my audience expect a 'comic' pantomime, and I *hope* this is 'comic.'"

"But," cried the tantalised author (who had prided himself on being remarkably "comic," and who in the fashion of those days had scattered puns over his work as through a pepper-box), "you have *heard it read!* Isn't it comic?"

"I don't know. My audiences must be the judges of that," gloomily responded Mr. Rodgers.

One more little anecdote of him I must be permitted to tell. When he was quite an old but still an upright, vivacious, and most active man, his well-dressed hair was as black and glossy as a raven's wing. His "good-natured friends" had their suspicions, and I think they were confirmed when, after being absent on the Continent for some weeks, he returned silver-headed. On his way to Birmingham he had looked in at his London club, and there he was the unconscious victim of a practical joke, in which, I think, Toole was the ringleader. His

fellow-members and intimate friends absolutely declined to know him ! It was no use, they declared, for him to pass himself off as their dear old friend James Rodgers. Rodgers was at Ostend, and had jet-black hair ! The jest was well kept up, and I had a telegram from one of the mirth-loving conspirators telling me what had happened, and imploring me when their victim came to Birmingham to back them up by not recognising him. I am not a good hand at jokes of this kind, and the first time I met my good old friend I stopped and shook hands with him.

“ Ah ! you know me, then ! ” said he, looking pleased.

“ Of course,” I answered.

“ You see no great change in my personal appearance ? ”

“ No,” was the unblushing response.

Raising his hat, he said, with much gratification, “ I thought not, but our friends in town declare they see some grey hairs amongst erstwhile sable locks.”

“ Nonsense ! ” I said.

And it *was* nonsense, for his hair was *snow white*, and remarkably handsome the change made him.

I think the Kendals never forgot the enthusiastic and encouraging "send off" accorded them in Birmingham. At all events, in after years they became very good to the town, giving, in the short holidays they allowed themselves, readings in the great town hall on behalf of local hospitals, and thereby handing over very handsome sums of money to grateful and needy institutions. In those days a useful but acrimonious little paper, far more inclined to say caustic than kindly things, and which was wont to deliver itself in "open letters" to the people it wished to criticise and (generally) chastise, published the following epistle to Mrs. Kendal, and really it well sums up the situation :—

"MY DEAR MRS. KENDAL,—Although we have not the pleasure of knowing each other, I feel constrained at the present moment to write you a few lines. No, you don't know me—but, ah me ! I know you, and have admired you (oh, how ardently I have admired you !) from the days in which (as Madge Robertson) you came here helping to make the success of poor dead-and-gone Sothern, to that evening, only a few weeks ago, when I helped to cheer you and your

talented husband in Mr. Pinero's comedy, 'The Weaker Sex.' Birmingham, my dear Mrs. Kendal, has more cause to be grateful to you than to any other artist who has ever come amongst us. Not only have you periodically given us unalloyed delight by your matchless powers as an actress, but on more than one occasion you have come forward, and, without the ghost of an obligation, done noble work for our useful but unhappily needy charities. Both the Queen's and the Women's Hospitals have already benefited by your unselfish labours, and now the institution that does so much admirable work for the afflicted little ones of our town is to have the advantage of your kindly aid. Thank you, dear Mrs. Kendal—in the name of the town—thank you. You hardly know, perhaps, how gracious a figure, standing in our town hall by the side of your husband, and unaided by footlights or scenery, you present, as, on behalf of a noble cause, you faultlessly deliver your well-chosen recitations. If on those occasions you and Mr. Kendal could see yourselves as others see you, as the rarely gifted English lady and gentleman devoting your talents to the benefit of the diseased children of an overcrowded town, you would have

your reward ; and if I were in your place I would rather have it in that shape than in the form of a banquet."

Early in 1875 the discerning and energetic Mr. John Hollingshead (what a monument of labour that book of his, entitled "*Gaiety Chronicles*," reveals!), ever on the look-out for the "best attraction going," engaged the Kendals for a brief season at the Opera Comique, and for its second feature secured the late (ah! how sad it is that in a book like this one should so often have to write "the late"! ) Mr. Arthur Cecil, then newly fledged from the nest of the German Reeds at the "*Gallery of Illustration*," and fast flying into popularity as an actor, to play parts new to him, in which he was sure to excite curiosity. In "*She Stoops to Conquer*" the Kendals were of course "bound to win" in their old Haymarket parts of Kate Hardcastle and Young Marlowe ; but of poor Arthur Cecil (in parts that suited him one of the most finished of artists) as Tony Lumpkin Mr. Hollingshead has recorded that it was a most "gentlemanly" performance—"not quite what Goldsmith meant, but no matter. It was Anthony Lumpkin, Esq., J.P., M.P., a good



average county member, with a dash of the vestryman and the London county councillor."

Things seemed to go awry with that season at the Opera Comique. In that wonderful "Mystery of Edwin Drood"—a mystery that, most unhappily, was never cleared up (and which for their lifetime will haunt those who love their Dickens, and who still aimlessly want to unravel it)—there is a chapter entitled "A Gritty State of Things Comes On." In one of Keane's delightful *Punch* pictures an elderly gentleman who had found his way into a county cricket ground, and who has some vague recollection of the game in his schooldays of long ago, asks a smart young "professional" why a certain deadly "trundle" from the bowler was called a "yorker." "Well," said the professional, after a moment's thought, "what else could you call it?" Similarly, I am inclined to ask, why during this Opera Comique season a "gritty state of things" came on? Certainly it was the only thing you could call it.

Somehow the pieces in which the Kendals—departing, be it marked, from Haymarket traditions—had made such a *furore* in the great provincial centres, proved, at the moment, unacceptable to London. The critics "snapped"

at "The Lady of Lyons," and the public followed the warning of the critics. Even when "As You Like It" was excellently produced the support was as poor as the praise was faint-hearted, though all that the most outspoken and competent critic of those days had to say of the Rosalind of Mrs. Kendal was :—

"One side of the character of Rosalind is shown by Mrs. Kendal with admirable clearness and point. So suited to her style are the bantering speeches Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Rosalind, they might almost have been written for her. A certain undercurrent of irony" (this remains true criticism to-day) "is apparent in all Mrs. Kendal's acting. At times its effect is excellent. The most telling pathos has a flavour of the kind. So strong is this in the writings of Thackeray, it has caused one of the most tender and sympathetic of writers to be regarded as a satirist. With Mrs. Kendal, however, the irony can scarcely, perhaps, be said to add to the pathos. The woman seems always a little inclined to deride her own weaknesses, and to pity and laugh at herself for her yieldings. Such speeches as those addressed to Orlando by the supposed *Ganymede* were delivered with



*Photo Lp*

MRS. KENDAL AS "ROSALIND."

*[Barraud,*



marvellous effect, and the short epilogue was delightful. What was wanting was the underlying tenderness that more emotional artists are able to present.”

I venture to think that “what was wanting” was an appreciative audience. Certainly I had recently seen the tender side of Rosalind’s beautiful character shown to a house that understood the actress’s art, and warmed her for her work.

Mr. Kendal was of course the manly and picturesque Orlando, and Mr. Arthur Cecil essayed the character of Touchstone. Recognising the fact that the jester had been familiar with courts, he invested the part with commendable quietude and dignity. His appreciative and skilful utterance of Shakespearean wit was duly noted by the critical, but to the “general” the performance lacked breadth and colour.

It was just at this time that Mr. John Hare, who had been with the Bancrofts ever since the memorable opening night of the old Prince of Wales’s theatre in 1865 (a night that really brought about the *renaissance* of the English stage), and who so far had shared in all their triumphs — Robertsonian and otherwise — had made up his mind to woo fortune on his own account, and to become his own manager.

With this object in view—and not without many reluctant farewells to his dear friends in Tottenham Street—he had taken the old Court Theatre (hard by, but on a different site to the existing Court Theatre) in Sloane Square, Chelsea. Naturally anxious to surround himself with the most popular company he could gather together, he was lucky enough to secure the Kendals, and, on March 13, 1875, the new venture was successfully launched with the production of an original comedy by Mr. Charles Coghlan entitled “Lady Flora.” It was written on the familiar Robertson lines—admirably witty in dialogue, but without the strongly marked characterisation that had had so much to do with the success of “Ours,” “Caste,” and “School.”

Faultlessly acted by a company that, in addition to Mr. Hare and the Kendals, included the well-known names of Mrs. Gaston Murray, Miss Amy Fawsitt, Miss Bessie Hollingshead, Miss Mary Rorke, Mr. R. Cathcart, Mr. H. Kemble, Mr. Charles Kelly, and Mr. John Clayton, it was deservedly well received, and had a fair run, but it cannot be said that it gave any of its exponents good acting chances.

Mr. Kendal once more contented himself with

a colourless part, but Mrs. Kendal (still figuring in the playbill as “Miss Madge Robertson”) made the character of Lady Flora sympathetic, and displayed power and finish of style. In a position of difficulty, in which she had to make the first advances to a lover afraid of the wealth and station he covets, her delicacy was of signal service; and her burst of indignation in the closing scene, when she offered to accompany to the railway the man whose banishment was due to his affection for her, was excellent.

So much for her acting. As for the part a critic aptly said: “A man less resolute in pursuit than Armytage might find the lady’s proceedings almost too unconventional, and might, after the example of a lover, not much given to squeamishness in like matters, sing—

“ ‘The apple that melts without squeezing  
Is rather too mellow for me.’ ”

Mr. Hare’s next production was a “comedy-drama” by Mr. Hamilton Aidé entitled “A Nine Days’ Wonder.” This was a pretty and interesting rather than a great play, but Mrs. Kendal had some admirable and infinitely touching scenes with Mr. Hare (played to perfection by both artists), and no one who heard it

will ever forget Mrs. Kendal's exquisitely tender rendering of Mr. Aidé's charming song commencing—

“ Oh, let me dream of happy days gone by,  
Forgetting sorrows that have come between.”

With the Kendals as leading members of his company it was only natural that Mr. Hare should think it advisable to commission Mr. W. S. Gilbert to write another of those “ fairy comedies ” which they had made so attractive at the Haymarket; and so on December 9, 1875, “ Broken Hearts ” was produced. It was a charming play, and well merited the words of that giant amongst critics, Mr. Joseph Knight, who wrote: “ That Mr. Gilbert should have found fairy stories a convenient vehicle for satire is easily conceived. One of the simplest and most customary means of ridiculing human institutions is to test their effect upon unsophisticated natures. Fairy machinery lends itself readily to such a purpose. In a world in which nothing can be pronounced impossible or illogical, since the law of sequence is abrogated, the wildest experiments are permissible. In his fairy dramas, accordingly, Mr. Gilbert has done elaborately what, with machinery much less complicated,



was accomplished by Voltaire in more than one of his tales, and notably in his ‘*L’Ingénu*.’ Galatea—who from a statue is converted into a woman, and who, in a candid and ingenuous search after truth, finds nothing around her but deceit, insincerity, and sham—is a feminine counterpart to the Huron of Voltaire. Gradually, however, in his employment of these means, Mr. Gilbert has laid upon them a heavier duty. At first the satirical purpose was sufficient. The comic complications of ‘*The Wicked World*’ sought only to provoke laughter. In ‘*Pygmalion and Galatea*’ the author blended sadness with mirth, and by a humanising touch presented his heroine as sickened with the follies and frivolities around her, and seeking again the repose of marble from which she had been roused. From this position to that he now assumes is a short and easy step. After presenting a being weary of the torments of love, and invoking oblivion, it is natural to depict one to whom the torments themselves shall prove fatal. In three pieces, however, Mr. Gilbert has presented himself in as many different lights. In ‘*The Wicked World*’ he is a satirist, in ‘*Pygmalion and Galatea*’ he is a humorist, and in ‘*Broken Hearts*’ he is a poet.

The three plays together form the most important contribution to fairy literature that has been supplied by any dramatist, or, indeed, any writer, since the commencement of the sixteenth century."

Yes, it was in truth a stage poem, and it was poetically rendered by Mr. Kendal as Prince Florian, Mrs. Kendal as Lady Hilda, and (notably) by Miss Hollingshead as Lady Vavir. As a stage production it was perfect, but I suppose at that time the fickle London playgoer was not in the mood for such high-class work. Be that as it may, "Broken Hearts" did not receive half the support that it merited, and most unhappily it was the last of the Gilbert fairy plays. Why cannot that delightfully fanciful writer give us another?

The next production at the Court Theatre proved to be one of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal's greatest triumphs. When I was writing the story of his stage career Mr. Hare told me how, ever since, as an amateur, he had taken part in a representation of Mr. Palgrave Simpson's first adaptation of M. Victorien Sardou's famous French comedy, "Les Pattes de Mouche," he had been struck with the wonderful possibilities of the play. That first English version, in which

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan had appeared in the parts destined to become so popular in the hands of the Kendals, had not “drawn the town,” and it had been set down as a mere *succès d'estime*. This, Mr. Hare felt, was due to the fact that Mrs. Alfred Wigan, although perfectly artistic in all she did, was at the time it fell in her way too old for the part of the vivacious and fascinating heroine. Her performance was full of ability, but it had lacked “charm.” He felt certain that in Mrs. Kendal’s clever hands, backed by her fascinating appearance and manner, this difficult character would, from every point of view, be perfectly safe; and the result proved the correctness of his judgment.

Mr. Palgrave Simpson was easily persuaded to revise his work, and make it absolutely “English,” and this newly twisted up “Scrap of Paper” was an immediate and enormous success. As Susan Hartley Mrs. Kendal was voted perfect; and as Colonel Blake Mr. Kendal surprised every one and aroused enthusiasm. At last this true artist had an opportunity of evincing his infectious sense of humour, and of proving what he could do when a really good (albeit very intricate) comedy part came in his way. “A Scrap of Paper” had a prolonged run

at the Court Theatre, and subsequently became one of the most popular productions of the Hare and Kendal management at the St. James's. It still proves, and, as long as they go on playing it, is likely to prove one of the most attractive and popular items of the Kendals' repertory.

It would be interesting to know how many hundreds of thousands of playgoers in Great Britain and America Mr. and Mrs. Kendal have delighted as Susan Hartley and Colonel Blake. In such little pieces as "Uncle's Will" they had shown how, by playing into each other's hands, they could exchange repartee, and "A Scrap of Paper" seemed like "Uncle's Will," "written large" and with a serious purpose behind its badinage. If any one still doubts the influence of true acting on the masses I should like to take him to see, as I have over and over again seen, the Kendals playing in "A Scrap of Paper" to an overcrowded, and not always too select, audience in a provincial town. The piece is so well known now that every line in it is familiar to their loyal followers, but the laughter is always there, the sympathy is always there, the excitement is always there, and above all, that hushed silence between the laughter and applause, which is the highest tribute that can



*Photo by*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "A SCRAP OF PAPER."

*[Burraud*



be paid to actor and actress, is always there. Truly a magnificent and lasting success !

I have called this chapter “On the Wing,” and as the Kendals were free to flutter where they chose, they accepted, after the first long run of “A Scrap of Paper” at the Court Theatre, an offer to join and appear with the Bancrofts at that famous little house, the old Prince of Wales’s Theatre in Tottenham Street.

Their first parts there were Lady Ormonde and Dr. Thornton in “Peril,” by Messrs. Clement Scott and B. C. Stephenson, who chose in those days to call themselves “Saville Rowe and Bolton Rowe.” “Peril” was a stage version of Victorien Sardou’s brilliant comedy, “Nos Intimes,” which had already been made familiar to English audiences not only by eminent French actors, but by adaptations entitled “Friends and Foes” and “Our Friends.” Now for the first time it was completely Anglicised. The scene was laid in the country house of a wealthy English baronet, and all the characters had their English names and degrees. By some this was not thought an improvement, and one clever writer said: “It is difficult to change the venue and the citizenship of French comedy and its characters. No pains have been spared,

and indeed considerable ingenuity has been exercised in the matter ; but, at most, the play has been denationalised somewhat. An artificial view of French life and manner and idiosyncrasy is hardly to be converted into an acceptable picture of English society. Throughout the play it is felt that the characters, the motives swaying them, the situations in which they appear, the relationship they bear to each other, the air they breathe, are not of Britannic nature. The masquerade may be clever enough and well sustained, but every domino hides a Frenchman."

But, in spite of a good deal of criticism such as this, "Peril" became exceedingly popular. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal scored in their parts (he was exceedingly happy as Dr. Thornton), and the piece had a long run. It still holds the stage ; and in Sir Woodbine Grafton, a character created and right well played by Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. Beerbohm Tree has found one of his favourite character studies.

By the way, it was about this time that theatrical managers were being good-humouredly chaffed about over-attention to stage upholstery, and I have in my mind's eye a picture that appeared in *Punch* labelled "Peril," and in



which a luckless actor and a helpless actress, who ought to have got away from each other, or who ought to have come together, I cannot say which, were hopelessly imprisoned in the collections of chairs, tables, cabinets, and bric-à-brac by which they were not only surrounded but enveloped.

The next venture at the Tottenham Street house was an admirable revival of Dion Boucicault's "London Assurance," revised by the author and reduced to four acts. I have no doubt that I am absolutely wrong, but I have always regarded this as the most overrated and artificial of plays, and whenever I see it I think of what Charles Dickens wrote about it in the far-off days of 1847. "Shall I ever forget," he says, "Vestris in 'London Assurance' (Madame Vestris was the original Grace Harkaway) bursting out with certain praises (they always elicited three rounds)—of a country morning, I think it was? The atrocity was perpetrated, I remember, on a lawn before a villa. It was led up to by flower-pots. The thing was as like any honest sympathy, or honest English, as the rose-pink on a sweep's face on May Day is to a beautiful complexion; but Harley (he was the 'creator' of Mark Meddle) generally appeared

touched to the soul, and a man in the pit always cried out, ‘ Beau-ti-ful ’ ! ”

Probably the play was never better acted than it was at the Prince of Wales’s in 1877, and I do not think it ever had a longer run. Concerning the alterations Mr. Boucicault wisely wrote to Mr. Bancroft from America :—

“ Your shape of ‘ London Assurance ’ will be, like all you have done at the Prince of Wales’s, unexceptionable. I wish I could be there to taste your brew.” And he was right. All the changes were improvements, and it was staged in the most admirable taste.

And yet, great success though the production was, Mrs. Bancroft (now Lady Bancroft) tells a curious anecdote of its first night. “ The programme,” she says, “ was not over until very late, and greatly accounted for the extraordinary silence on which the curtain finally fell. But I shall never forget the effect it had on all concerned. Mrs. Kendal was amazed ; it seemed to take away her breath, and after a long look of surprise, first at one person, then at another, she exclaimed, ‘ *Well!* ’ Mr. Kendal remarked, ‘ What does it mean ? ’ Mr. Cecil observed, ‘ That’s funny ! ’ Mr. Bancroft replied quietly, ‘ I don’t see where the *fun* comes in—it’s

deuced puzzling!’ There they all stood, just as the curtain had closed them in, with an expression of blank wonder on every face—*sans* applause, *sans* call, *sans* everything! Eventually Mr. Bancroft followed me to my room, and asked what I thought. Was it a failure? The comedy went very well throughout until the very end—then utter silence! What could it forebode? How little an audience knows what power it possesses! and how frequently it can deprive a manager of a night’s rest—nay, *several*!

“This remarkable occurrence was the topic of our conversation all the next day; but our hearts were made easy by the good old comedy proving a great success until the end of the season, and Mrs. Kendal fairly revelled in the part of Lady Gay.”

The play was splendidly cast. Mr. Kendal was a dashing, manly, and interesting Charles Courtly; Mr. Bancroft was well suited as Dazzle; and Mr. Arthur Cecil gave quite a convincing picture of Sir Harcourt Courtly; returning to the scene of his former triumph in “Caste,” Mr. George Honey was very droll as that impossible stage lawyer, Mark Meddle; Miss Carlotta Addison was charming as Grace

Harkaway ; and Mrs. Bancroft really did wonders and became very popular in the small character of Pert. No doubt she "gagged" the part, but happy the author to be "gagged" by such an actress ! "London Assurance" was preceded by a captivating little play, adapted from the French of M. Octave Feuillet by Mr. Clement Scott, entitled "The Vicarage." In it, except for a servant's part, there were only three characters, and yet it was a perfect little drama in miniature. The three life studies were exquisitely rendered by Mrs. Bancroft, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and Mr. Kendal, who quite startled his audience by his strikingly handsome appearance as a bearded traveller.

It was during the run of "Peril," and on an Ash Wednesday, when, in obedience to the ridiculous legislation of those days, all West End London theatres had (at heavy loss) to close their doors, while places of entertainment were kept open all over the country, that Mr. Bancroft, accompanied by Mr. Kendal, journeyed to Paris to see Sardou's latest production, "Dora." They were delighted with the play, and before their hurried visit was at an end Mr. Bancroft had purchased the English rights in it at a price never hitherto paid to a French dramatist.

Pending the adaptation and production of an English version of "Dora," the Kendals had to fulfil their engagements in the provinces, for, very wisely and very rightly, whatever their London successes might be, they never forgot their trusty friends in (apart from London) the great cities and townships of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Indeed, this constancy on their part has made them by far the most popular of all the artists who have "taken to the road." Their annual visits were (and still are) looked upon as annual gala days, and they have no idea (I often tell them so) how they have endeared themselves to thousands and thousands of "all sorts and conditions" of people. They have always played as if they loved their audiences, and their audiences have ever received them as if they loved them.

It has fallen to my lot to mix much with the working classes in one of our largest manufacturing cities, and I know how much delight a visit to the theatre, and the remembrance of it, brings to their monotonous and jaded lives. These eager frequenters of the shilling pit or the sixpenny gallery generally, and with much affection, retain their playbills. I have seen scores and scores of them carefully stowed away

under the work-bench in the manufactory, or in a well-guarded drawer in the not too well-equipped home; and I know that periodically they have been carefully taken out, smoothed and coned over, while dear old memories have been revived and discussed. Once, knowing that I set store by such things, a broken-down old workman, with trembling hands, took out his little bundle, and begged me to keep it. "I've never been able to afford pictures," said he, "but my playbills has been pictures to me ever since I can remember. Take 'em, sir, and look after 'em when I'm gone. I shouldn't like 'em to fall into the hands of any one as wouldn't valley 'em at their right price."

Pictures in the way of photographs and cuttings from the illustrated papers may also be collected nowadays, and these, either set in cheap frames or pinned to the walls, decorate the town working-man's house. And I have reason to believe that among such cherished playbills and portraits none are so popular as those which deal with the well-loved name of "Kendal." I might quote many instances of the value set upon these little hoards, and I think one and all would read the actor the pleasant lesson that, in common with the poet,

writer, sculptor, painter, composer, and musician, he can never know how much his accomplished work is appreciated, the amount of good it does, the never-to-be-forgotten pleasure it affords.

Not very long ago I was reading of a young poet who was gazing at a famous monument in one of our noble English abbey churches. His first little volume of verse (said the author) had just been published, and he had a smartly bound copy of it in his pocket. The day before he had been very, very proud of it; but that morning's post had brought him a newspaper in which a critic had thought fit to tear his poor work to shreds, to lay its faults bare, to pass over its merits, and generally to hold it up to ridicule. For the time being all the joy had gone out of that young writer's life. He fancied that every one in the church had a copy of that newspaper in his pocket, and knew (what he now considered to be) his shame. As a matter of fact no one there had seen the newspaper; but he was sore, and he wished that his poor little book could be drowned as deep as Prospero's. Now, while this half heart-broken young poet stood with blurred eyes gazing at the monument there was by his side a young and sweet-faced woman dressed in deep mourning. Poor thing! She was not a

critic, but, within a few weeks after she had become a happy and hopeful wife, a sorrowing widow. It so happened that a friend had given her the little book of poems, and some of the verses had touched and consoled her at the right moment, and in a manner beyond description ; and so it came about that while the poet's eyes welled over with mortification, hers swam with gratitude to the unknown author who had so soothed and helped her. "If I could only know him, talk to him, and thank him!" she was saying to herself ; while he was murmuring, "I have mistaken my vocation ; I am a vain fool ; I have fruitlessly squandered my time." There they were, side by side. He had comforted her without knowing it ; it was unlikely they would ever meet again ; but surely here was a proof that work well meant and honestly done is never thrown away, though those who do it may be the last to know it.

As it was with that young poet, so it is with the sensitive actor—and when I say actor I of course mean actress too—prone to smart under the lash of criticism, the lash which, after all, is courted by all who voluntarily come before the public. Even though it may not be perfect, honest endeavour is sure to leave its marks



behind it; and these cherished playbills and cheap portraits, bearing the imprint of toil-stained fingers, are so many witnesses in its favour. The artisan in pit or gallery and the actor on the stage are unlikely to “rub shoulders” in the world; but the one never forgets the gleam of romance that the other has shed across the dull pathway of his life. The Kendals have achieved many great things, but one of their chief prides should be the affectionate regard in which, thanks to their consummate art, they have been held in the English provinces since their first independent tour in 1874.

Mr. Clement Scott has told us how the English stage version of “Dora” was written. Remembering the great success they had helped to make for him in “Peril,” Mr. Bancroft had naturally asked Mr. Scott and Mr. Stephenson to undertake the adaptation of his new purchase, and, shortly after it had been concluded, the three went to Paris to judge how it had best be done. As Mr. Scott points out, the task presented tremendous difficulties. In common with most French plays, it was far too long for English audiences; there were some things in it that would be objectionable to them (we were far more sensitive in those days than we are

now!), and there were many things in it that they would not understand. In spite of the immense "grip" of its situations and the cleverness of its character-drawing, a mere translation of the great Parisian "Dora" would probably have been a *fiasco* in London. Some new motive must be found. The question was, "What should it be?" Well, it was just at this time that every one was singing—

"We don't want to fight,  
But by Jingo if we do!"

which, by the way, I came across in Paris as—

"Nous ne voulons pas la guerre,  
Mais par Dieu si nous combattons!"

and thought that Dieu for Jingo was a decidedly free adaptation, and—— but Mr. Scott will permit me to quote his own words.

"Time and opportunity served us," he says. "England just at that time was in the thick of the Eastern Question. No one knew whether we should or should not help the Turk against the Russian. Prejudices were divided, and Eastern politics were discussed in every newspaper. An official despatch of importance had to be stolen, and an interest given it that would

appeal to English sentiment generally, and particularly to English soldiers. Although it is so long ago, I think that I can apportion equally the credit—if, indeed, it is a credit—of the various alterations that turned Sardou’s play into a brilliant success instead of a failure, as it must have been had it been translated and its motive matter unchanged, as its author pretended to desire. First of all, Bancroft cracked the first difficult nut by suggesting that the two leading male characters in the play should be brothers. He saw at the outset the value of the brothers Beauclerc. It was an invaluable suggestion. Stephenson, who had been in a Government office for years—and so had I, for the matter of that—and as a Private Secretary knew all the inner workings of the Foreign Office and diplomacy generally, was bent upon forcing an official tone into the play. Bancroft was all for soldiers, Stephenson was all for Government office. It must be a combination of War Office and Foreign Office. At last it struck me in a mysterious way—the Eastern Question, of course! I was a fierce Jingo at the time, and I believe it was ‘Jingoism’—that is to say, the Beaconsfield policy—that gave the play its first interest so far as England was concerned. When that random

shot was fired by the Eastern Question the difficulties melted away like snow. Bancroft got his soldiers, Stephenson got his diplomatic tone, I got my Jingoism."

Under these happy conditions the play was written and produced, and "Diplomacy," as in its English dress it was called, proved one of the greatest victories of the famous Bancroft *régime*. I wonder if that Eastern Question had really a great deal to do with its success? I know that when a few years ago the piece was revived by Mr. Hare it interested me as much as ever, and delighted younger folk who had never heard of the Jingo days of 1878. And yet all around me were people who told me that it was hopelessly "old-fashioned," and that I was wrong to enjoy and praise it. But they were people who had "seen it before," and were therefore well equipped to pose as keen dramatic critics.

The perfect way in which it was acted did much to secure the triumph of "Diplomacy," and every member of an admirable company seemed well placed. But I am not saying too much when I assert that the Kendals bore away the palms. In the arduous and sympathetic part of Dora Mrs. Kendal, of course, had the great part of the play, and right well she availed

herself of her opportunity; and, to quote Mr. Joseph Knight, “Mr. Kendal revealed as Captain Beauclerc, the hero, an amount of force that he has not previously displayed, and carried off the honours of the evening.”

“The cast,” says Mr. William Archer, “was perhaps the strongest on record in the annals of the contemporary stage. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played the hero and heroine (Julian Beauclerc and Dora), Mr. Bancroft played Orloff, Mrs. Bancroft the Countess Zicka, Mr. John Clayton Harry Beauclerc, and Mr. Arthur Cecil Baron Stein. Thus, with the exception of Mr. Hare, all the leading figures of our modern school of comedy appeared on the same stage, and the result was an almost unprecedented success, the crowning glory of the Bancroft management.”

It was with this brilliant production that the Kendals’ association with the Bancrofts and the Prince of Wales’s Theatre ceased, for Mr. Hare wanted them to return to his theatrical home in Chelsea, and they did not resist his appeal.

Accordingly, in 1879 we find them once more at the Court Theatre revelling in a revival of “A Scrap of Paper.” From the serious earnestness of Julian and Dora to the laughter-moving repartee and intrigue of Colonel Blake and

Susan Hartley was a far cry, but the Kendals quickly proved that the long run of "Diplomacy" had left no jar in their comedy notes, and the former success was repeated.

By the way, I should have mentioned that in the autumn of 1878 they had taken "Diplomacy" on tour, so that they had practically played the same arduous parts for twelve months. The company supporting them was an excellent one (that clever actor Mr. Mackintosh, then just coming to the front, made a great hit as Baron Stein), and the popularity of play and players was unbounded.

It was while the revived "Scrap of Paper" was still running at the Court that, at a tentative afternoon performance—*matinées* were comparatively rare events in those days—T. W. Robertson's adaptation of the comedy of Scribe and Legouv  , "Bataille des Dames," entitled "The Ladies' Battle," was produced. It is rather curious to note how few were the characters in her distinguished brother's plays that fell to the lot of Mrs. Kendal. She had "created" his Lady Clara Vere de Vere in "Dreams"; she had appeared in Hull in his adaptation called "Passion Flowers," and now she undertook his Countess d'Autreval—but that was all. "The



*Phototypy*

MR. KENDAL IN "A SCRAP OF PAPER."

*[obscured]*





Ladies' Battle ” is one of the works which, before he had made his mark, Robertson translated and adapted for speculators at a price, it is said, of something like ten shillings an act. Poor fellow ! If he had only lived to see his tenderly written and hitherto misunderstood work acted in the days of 1879 at the Court Theatre ! It was most beautifully mounted and costumed. To produce a play with absolute devotion to detail has ever been a delight to Mr. Hare ; no doubt the keenly artistic eye of Mr. Kendal was of great service ; and the audiences for the time being seemed to live in and breathe the atmosphere of the picturesque (if unsatisfactory) days of Louis XVIII. of France. As the heroine—the *femme de trente ans*—of this delightful play Mrs. Kendal acted with a distinction that gave just the right tone to the story, and in the moment of her bitter but bravely borne disappointment deeply touched her hearers. Mr. Kendal's powers as a comedian found full scope in the extravagantly drawn character of Gustave de Grignon ; and Mr. Hare as the chameleon-like Préfet Montrichard gave one of his best performances. No wonder that the fortunes of the little Court Theatre were at high-water mark.

Astute actors and managers, who know how

difficult it is to secure good new plays, keep a watchful eye on the old ones that have been popular, and which are capable of being adapted to modern tastes. In this way Mr. Kendal turned his attention to the old French comedy, or vaudeville (for in its original form it was little more than that) "*Un Fils de Famille*." Two English versions of this work had been produced, and both in 1853, when Charles Kean had staged "*The Lancers*," or "*The Gentleman's Son*," at the Princess's; and Benjamin Webster had brought out "*The Discarded Son*" at the Adelphi. Surely a piece that had attracted two such managers was worthy of a revival, even though it had to be rewritten? Rewritten it had to be, and, as it is one of the charms of Mr. Kendal's character that he never forgets old friends, we find the name of Mr. G. W. Godfrey (of "*Queen Mab*" and the Haymarket days) announced as the adapter of "*The Queen's Shilling*" on its production at the Court Theatre in 1879.

Another signal success was immediately secured. Old playgoers who remembered the adaptations, or translations, of 1853 were particularly struck with the refinement of the production; and younger ones voted the story and

the characters delightful. From that day to this the parts of the dashing and heroic young lancer and the charming girl heiress, who for a time has to masquerade as the fascinating barmaid of a country alehouse, have been favourite ones with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, and only a year or two ago I saw them playing them as brightly and well as ever. Mr. Hare, too, was particularly well suited as the irascible Colonel, and those who remember the scene at the piano in which he joined with the Kendals in the refrain commencing—

"Speak to me, love, and with thy glances,"

and continually broke down, while Mrs. Kendal endeavoured to keep peace between the two quarrelsome men, will agree with me that they then saw pure modern English comedy at its brightest and its best.

On July 19, 1879, Mr. Hare said goodbye to the little Chelsea house, and in the following words, and to an enthusiastic audience, announced his forthcoming partnership with Mr. Kendal in the management of the St. James's Theatre.

"Union is strength," he said, "and I feel that in associating myself with an admirable man of business and a most able artist, and at the same

time gaining the permanent services of his accomplished wife, there seems a reasonable hope of conducting successfully a theatre which up to the present time has laboured under the stigma of being unfortunate. I assure you we shall work our hardest to remove its ill-luck, and that it will be through no lack of endeavour on our part if we fail. I may tell you that our plan of campaign will be similar to the one adopted by me here. Comedy and comedy-drama will form the staple of our dramatic fare, and we shall endeavour to get the best company together, with a view to giving that which is always, I take it, the most satisfactory thing to an audience—an even, all-round performance.”

## CHAPTER VI

*ST. JAMES'S THEATRE, 1879-1884*

IN the early autumn of 1879 Mr. and Mrs. Kendal—now accompanied for the first time by Mr. Hare—went on their annual provincial tour, and on October 4th of the same year the partners opened the reconstructed and redecorated St. James's Theatre. It was certainly the handsomest and most luxurious playhouse then to be seen in London. Both before and behind the curtain everything was done to promote the comfort of the audiences and those engaged to amuse them. Everywhere the most exquisite taste was in evidence: pictures adorned the artistically decorated walls; well-printed programmes on conveniently sized cards were placed on the soft and richly coloured seats of the auditorium; cheerful-looking and obliging attendants were ready to attend to the wants of the visitors; and the whole place seemed to look more like a

well-appointed and carefully kept house than a theatre. It was, indeed, apparent that the new managers had quite enough faith in their venture to "back" it with lavish, but by no means injudicious, expenditure.

For the opening programme nothing was wanted but "The Queen's Shilling," still in the heyday of its first success, but this was supplemented by an attractive little costume play from the pen of Mr. Val Prinsep, entitled "Monsieur le Duc," in which Mr. Hare figured picturesquely as the libertine, but not wholly bad-hearted, Duc de Richelieu.

An opportunity soon came in the way of the new management that was not to be lost. The strong (one might almost say the strange) desire of Lord Tennyson (he was Alfred Tennyson in 1879) to write for the stage is now a matter of history. In those days it was in its infancy, and, detecting manifold beauties in "The Falcon," and naturally feeling proud to have the Laureate's name on their programmes, Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal willingly undertook to comply with his desire and produce it. The piece, which was founded on a story in "The Decameron" of Boccaccio, did not present anything striking from a dramatic point of view,

but it lent itself well to stage setting, and it was certain that Mr. and Mrs. Kendal would not only be exceedingly picturesque as the Count Alberighi and the Lady Giovanna, but would deliver the poet's lines in the way he would have them spoken. Accordingly, on December 18th this unique play-poem was produced, and though it was never expected that it would prove popular with the masses, it scored far more than the mere *succès d'estime*. The staging of the piece was remarkably beautiful, and while the cultured ear listened lovingly to the sweet flow of verse the eye rested on a feast of colour. With his handsome "peregrine" on his fist, and a picture in make-up and costume, Mr. Kendal was a manly representative of the falconer of the Middle Ages, and very effectively sang a plaintive ditty, playing an accompaniment upon the guitar. Mrs. Kendal, clad like the morning in a mantle of golden russet, was the beautiful and stately Italian Lady Monna Giovanna to the life.

The play was certainly the occasion for displaying with singular clearness the delicate as well as forcible talent of the actress. There was the more need for an artist skilled in rendering the softer emotions since Monna Giovanna, magnificent in her queenly robes, is an all too

stately dame to move ordinary human hearts to their innermost depths. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether in less skilful hands the Italian lady, as drawn for the stage, would have inspired sympathy. The trouble of the cast was the noble-looking, great-eyed, and soft-plumaged peregrine-falcon. Mr. Kendal had taken great pains in procuring and taming the bird, and at home he was docile enough, but he was not "stage-struck," and resented the foot-lights in a way that was painful to the wrist that bore him. The poor creature died during the run of the play, and to-day, under a glass-case, stands as a sad (but very handsome) example of those who are forced to follow a profession for which they have no aptitude.

With their past provincial experiences in full view the Kendals ever had in mind the old plays that (whatever their merits or demerits might be) were sure to draw audiences, and no doubt they induced Mr. Hare to revive Tom Taylor's perennial comedy, "Still Waters Run Deep." If they were instrumental in persuading him to play the part of old Potter, they did him a good turn, for a rarer and more humorous study of an eccentric character had never been seen.

The piece had, so far, never had such a good



chance, and right well it responded to the call. Mr. Kendal was an ideal John Mildmay, the apparently placid, nonchalant man, with the undercurrent of British discernment and pluck, suiting him to perfection; and, though to my mind the part was unworthy of her, Mrs. Kendal made her mark as Mrs. Sternhold.

When I was writing my book on Mr. Hare he told me a curious story respecting this revival of "Still Waters Run Deep," and I then made use of it, but as it affects Mrs. Kendal (she has often told it to me), and shows how she and her stage companion, by wonderful presence of mind and force of will, exercised in the right way and at the right moment, averted serious calamity, I am bound to say something about it here. The St. James's Company, on one of their annual provincial tours, were playing the piece at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, to an almost uncomfortably packed house. In those days precautions against fire and its grim attendant panic were not so rigidly enforced as they are now, and to make room for the overwhelming audience the orchestra had been banished to the regions below the stage, and all the gangways were blocked with chairs. Under such conditions anything in the nature of a

scare would be attended by ghastly consequences. Now, those who are familiar with "Still Waters Run Deep" will remember that when the curtain rises on the first act all the principal characters are discovered. John Mildmay, Mrs. Mildmay, and Mrs. Sternhold are in the foreground of the picture, and old Potter is seated at the back, half dozing by the fireside, with his preposterous old-fashioned pocket-handkerchief thrown over his head and face, and with his back to the audience. To suggest a bright fire in the grate a lighted lamp was used, and through the thin silk of his handkerchief Mr. Hare, to his intense horror, saw that the too highly turned-up flame had ignited that part of the flimsy scene painted to represent the mantelpiece, and that slowly but surely the smouldering fire was increasing. By good fortune he had once been a member of the stock company at this theatre, and so knew his bearings well. But, alas! he also knew that in case of a fire breaking out on a crowded night (the house has long since been altered) it would prove a veritable death-trap. He realised, too, that if the audience saw the steadily growing flames a panic with its awful results would ensue. Happily some moments had to elapse before he would be expected to respond to his cue, and

slowly rising, and in the slipshod, senile manner he assumed in portraying this character, he shuffled off the stage. His comic exit caused roars of laughter, but it was not accomplished before, in some subtle way, he had contrived to convey to Mrs. Kendal its cause. Then she, like the brave, quick woman that she is, calmly took her stand before the fireplace, and with her skirts hid the burning scenery from the audience. Behind the scenes, and not without danger and difficulty, Mr. Hare, assisted by a carpenter and wet blankets (and with Mrs. Kendal continuing her part, and resolutely shielding their operations) contrived to extinguish the conflagration, and then, shambling on to the stage again, was greeted by the nobly self-possessed Mrs. Sternhold with, "Well, brother Potter, and where have *you* been?" They laughed, and so did the audience, little knowing that through the courage and presence of mind of their entertainers they had mercifully escaped a terrible catastrophe.

At the St. James's "Still Waters Run Deep" was in due course succeeded by a welcome revival of "The Ladies' Battle," supplemented by the farce of "A Regular Fix," in which Mr. Kendal (always good in a rollicking comedy part) greatly

distinguished himself as Sir Hugh de Brass, a character previously made famous by Charles Mathews and E. A. Sothern.

There was—or seemed to be—a dearth of English dramatists at that time, and again the management looked up old material. Douglas Jerrold's breezy nautical play, "Black-Eyed Susan," with its absorbing story and its distinct characterisation, had always been a favourite one; long before they met each other Mr. and Mrs. Kendal had been popular as the brave sailor William and Susan his faithful wife; in their early married days they had been cordially welcomed in those characters in the provinces; why not a revival of such an established success? But would, they had to ask themselves, the play in its existing form, with its old-fashioned "front scenes" and its somewhat highly coloured dialogue, prove attractive to the West End audiences catered for at the St. James's? This seemed doubtful; but why should not Mr. W. G. Wills (then at the zenith of his fame) be asked to do for the Kendals with Douglas Jerrold what he had done with Lord Lytton for Henry Irving, and Oliver Goldsmith for John Hare? Why should he not from another classic produce a play that, while retaining all

the main features of its original, would prove acceptable to modern West End audiences ?

Mr. Wills undertook the task, and he performed it well, but, as might have been expected, some of the older critics fell foul of the whole scheme, the outspoken Mr. Dutton Cook going so far as to say : " Certain critics have described Mr. Wills's ' William and Susan ' as a ' rehabilitation ' of Douglas Jerrold's ' Black-Eyed Susan.' Is that sufferer ' rehabilitated ' who, unnecessarily operated upon, and deprived of his more important limbs and organs, succeeds in escaping from the ruthless hands of his surgeon and dissector and tormentor ? Art, it is true, may have supplied the unhappy patient with mechanical in lieu of his natural members, with eyes of glass and toes of cork ; but, nevertheless, he can hardly be regarded as sound and entire, thoroughly his own man again—' rehabilitated ' in the legal sense of the word, reinstated in the rights of which a judicial sentence had dispossessed him. ' William and Susan ' at the St. James's is not an old play revived, with certain transpositions and omissions justified and rendered expedient by lapse of time or change of taste. Mr. Wills, while professing to found his drama upon ' Black-Eyed Susan,' has, in fact,

totally sunk and destroyed two out of Douglas Jerrold's three acts. The management pleads that Mr. Blanchard Jerrold, the dramatist's son, has sanctioned Mr. Wills's proceeding. I cannot think that in the circumstances Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's sanction of that he was powerless to prevent is of the slightest value. Would Cibber and Tate and other adaptors and mutilators of Shakespeare, have occupied a better position in the judgment of the world had their cobblings and tinkerings received the sanction of the poet's descendants? Yet the critics who censure Cibber applaud Mr. Wills. It may be said that a melodrama by Douglas Jerrold is not to be classed with the plays of Shakespeare. Yet the same principle is involved, let the author's name be Shakespeare, or Jerrold, or, as Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz would add, 'Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stoakes, or Stiles, or Brown, or Tompson.' How, for instance, would Mr. Wills like his 'Charles the First' to be revised and retrenched, altered and added to, by Messrs. Merritt and Pettitt, let me say? though I design no offence to those dramatists in, for a moment, availing myself of their names."

But the judgment of Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal was right. To have given the original

“Black-Eyed Susan” to the St. James’s playgoers would have been a mistake, as great a mistake as it would have been to have withheld them from an introduction to William and his sweet consort as impersonated by the Kendals. Once more the managers put their hearts into their work, and the stage pictures of Susan’s cottage, the beach at Deal, with the fleet in the Downs, the cabin of the man-of-war, and the deck of the same vessel, called forth universal admiration. Every tiny detail had attention, and the costumes and coiffures were correct, from the silk stockings and knee-breeches of the naval officers to the pigtails of the bluejackets of the early part of this century. It was impossible that such a beautiful production could fail to excite interest and create sympathy. If it had a fault (and this, surely, was no artistic fault) it was its overwhelming pathos. Into the last act, when William is under the death sentence, Mr. Wills had written in beautiful yet simple language a prayer for Susan, which was the most heart-rending thing I ever heard on the stage. Mrs. Kendal seemed to put her very soul into it, and awed her audiences into sympathetic silence. All who heard it admired and marvelled, but it was too affecting and haunting to be listened to

many times. And yet those who heard it love in quiet moments to recall it, and are all the better for its memory.

By and by there had to be another dive into the pigeon-holes of the theatrical library, and it was decided to commission Mr. Charles Coghlan to prepare yet another stage version of M. Octave Feuillet's famous French novel, "*Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*." As we have seen, in one of these, "*A Hero of Romance*," Mrs. Kendal had in earlier days appeared with Sothern at the Haymarket. It seemed certain that with such a popular subject, and such a clever writer to deal with it, unqualified success would be secured, and yet, oddly enough, "*Good Fortune*," as Mr. Coghlan's adaptation was called, proved the least attractive venture of the Hare and Kendal partnership. As the piece was perfectly acted, and the favourite old story was admirably set forth, it is hard to say why. The fickle public seemed to have tired of M. Octave Feuillet's romance, and their verdict had to be accepted.

Where author and artists have all done their best there is nothing more melancholy than a theatrical failure, and no doubt Mrs. Kendal had this on her mind when she once said: "May



I illustrate the feeling of an artist with regard to his or her part by a bold but homely figure? When the curtain rises on the first night of a production the play and all about it are quite new to the audience; but the artist has lived with it for weeks, perhaps months. A mother lost her baby once when it was but six weeks old, and when she grieved deeply and for a long time her husband remonstrated with her and said, ‘Why grieve over a child that was but six weeks with us?’ ‘Ah,’ she replied, ‘you forget that it was much longer than six weeks with me.’ ”

Let me, for a moment, continue to quote Mrs. Kendal :—

“The true actor,” she says, “consciously or unconsciously, carries his art along with him. If I go out to a reception I am at work—often unknown to myself. I see that a certain woman is interested in a certain man; is given either joy or grief through him. I watch her expression, I follow the play of nerve and muscle in her face, and thus I learn how the human face reveals the workings of the human soul; and I endeavour to follow what I have learned thus by observation.

“Let me give a further illustration of what I

mean. Actors and actresses, like others, have their sorrows, and I have had some bitter ones. But there are sorrows on which silence is the only possible course ; the heart must burst rather than the tongue should speak. Strangely and unconsciously the art of the actor or actress gives nature the outlet it craves. The mimic emotions of the stage are not unreality, pure and simple, to the artist, are not impersonal abstractions. Nay, they are often his or her very self. Through the gestures, the words, the looks of the character she is portraying, the actress is pouring forth all the unfathomable and unexpressed grief of her own heart. People tell me that my acting has increased in its pathos as I have grown older. I'faith it should ! It is difficult even for the best artist to adequately express emotions she has not felt in her own person ; if my acting has more of pathos, it is that I have seen and have felt more of life's sorrow. The scene that elicits thunders of applause, that draws up the curtain again and again, that brings down praises for its art, is often not acting at all. It is the soul laid bare of the man or woman who has been praised for the mimicry of the ideal."

One man's disappointment often means

another man's opportunity, and so it was in the case of Mr. Coghlan's "Good (or rather *bad*!) Fortune." Mr. A. W. Pinero, who was then known as a painstaking member of the Irving company at the Lyceum, and the author of one or two bright little comediettas, had had a more ambitious effort, "The Money Spinner," successfully exploited in the provinces, and this he had submitted to the management of the St. James's. There a change of bill had to be quickly made, and "The Money Spinner" was, in default of anything else, put into rehearsal. The chance for the author was certainly a splendid one, for, besides the Kendals and Mr. Hare, Mr. John Clayton, Mr. Mackintosh, and Miss Kate Phillips were included in the cast, and the piece was carried shoulder high to success. It was a strange and yet a fascinating play. To begin with, it was in two acts (which is always an unsatisfactory state of things) and the characters were for the most part disreputable. The heroine deliberately cheated at cards; her father was a drunken blackmailer; her sister vulgar and uninteresting; the hero a contemptible fellow who had embezzled his employer's money, and who was terribly afraid of what he had done; and his intimate friend was a knave

amongst detectives. Amidst this abandoned crew was placed a guileless but almost imbecile Scotch lordling, who seemed to want to be on terms of intimacy with one and all, and, as long as he got into this precious family circle, indifferent as to which of the two most undesirable sisters he married.

Mr. Pinero had elected to work with strange material, but so well had he manipulated it that he produced a play that absolutely throbbed with interest. It was brilliantly interpreted. Mr. Kendal was admirable as the vacuous Scotch peer, contriving, by sheer force of art, to secure sympathy where a less able actor would only have excited ridicule. Mrs. Kendal—as the unhappy girl cardsharp, the “money spinner” of the title—by a piece of acting as truthful, natural, and moving as it could well be, extorted compassion, and forced the public to acknowledge her work as well as condone her offence. It was a signal triumph to achieve, and it spoke volumes for the power of the actress. As the dissolute and crafty old Baron Croodle Mr. Hare presented one of the richest and ripest of his many character studies, and sound service was rendered by the other members of the company. A triumph was secured—not only for the

management, but for Mr. Pinero—and, as we shall presently see, it paved the way for great things.

The two-act “Money Spinner” not being long enough to eke out the bill, it was followed by a welcome revival of “A Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing,” in which Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, looking their best and playing their best, delighted the audiences as Jasper and Anne Carew. In Mr. Pinero the long wanted new dramatist had been discovered, but as he was not yet ready with a new play “The Lady of Lyons,” with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in their old parts of Claude Melnotte and Pauline Deschappelles, and Mr. Hare, “for the first time,” as Colonel Damas, was revived; and then followed an adaptation from the French of M. Albert Delpit by Mr. G. W. Godfrey, entitled “Coralie.” In Paris “Le Fils de Coralie” had been exceedingly popular, but its transplantation to English soil was a difficult if not a dangerous affair. In all truth its story was, to prejudiced British ears, an ugly one, and some alarm was expressed at such a “much too French French” plot being unfolded on the cleanly boards of the St. James’s. But the management had to go with the times, the theatrical weather-cock was just

then pointing to Paris, and in the face of a somewhat tempestuous wind the "Coralie" was fearlessly launched.

Whether plays dealing with matters that environ us, on which we cannot shut our eyes, but which are generally tabooed in home circles, should have a place on the English stage has ever been a mooted question, and it was far more freely raised in 1881 than it is in 1899.

For my own part, whenever I hear it discussed I think of the reply that the younger Alexandre Dumas made to the accusation that he above all other modern Frenchmen of genius had trooped the stage with vicious women: that he had christened the *demi-monde* by its new name, and drawn his most famous heroines from it; that he had sent his "Lady with the Camelias" starring it round the world, sometimes dressed in seductive prose, sometimes bedizened with *libretti* and dainty music, and when he had occasionally taken to "morality" it was generally to inculcate that the sins of a Messalina should be punished with the ferocity of an Amurath. Dumas's reply was as follows: "We dramatists," he said, "live by painting manners and characters, passions and vices—in a word, all the conflicts of poor human nature. Are we to pass



*Photo by*

*[John Collier,*

MR. KENDAL IN "A SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHING."

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Alpha 100



by silently and with averted visage these figures of modern society—novel, disquieting, absorbing—which play, and will play, so large a part in it ? ”

Then, in reply to the accusation that the stage was thus made a school either forbidden to the young or likely to corrupt them, the great French playwright answered : “ In a word, gentlemen, I speak as a dramatist, and I tell you that the stage is not designed for young girls. Do you know why I express myself so clearly ? It is simply because I respect all that is worthy of respect. I respect girls too much to ask them to listen to all that I have to say ; I respect my art too much to reduce it within the limits of what young girls may safely hear.”

Who shall say which is the right side of this still vexed and ever-open question ? I think most English folk will agree with the French critic who replied to M. Dumas : “ You tell us not to bring our daughters, and you say, ‘ I will address them when they are women.’ Pardon me ; there are many more subjects on which you may entertain them than you imagine ; and there are others of which it were better not to speak at all.”

Eighteen years ago "Coralie," which would easily have passed muster to-day, caused quite a fluster, and some of the good folk who went to see the play, and no doubt enjoyed it, objected that the subject was distasteful; that the scene ought never to have been changed from France to England; and that Mr. Godfrey was incorrect in his law. But on one point critics and the public were agreed. By her really magnificent acting in a most trying part Mrs. Kendal had surpassed all her previous efforts, and established her reputation as the first English actress of the day. Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal were, as ever, faultless in style and finish.

And yet, I think, the best friends of the St. James's gave a sigh of relief when "Coralie" went out of the bills to make way for a very different adaptation from the French. This was T. W. Robertson's wholesome and brilliantly written English version of M. Emile Augier's "L'Aventurière," entitled "Home," in which Sothorn had in former years made one of his successes at the Haymarket. In that captivating comedian's old part of Colonel White Mr. Kendal made another palpable hit; as the hapless Mrs. Pinchbeck Mrs. Kendal played with consummate taste and pathos; Mr. Hare,

with remorseless fidelity, appeared as the hateful Captain Mountraffe; and the dead author's son, the younger T. W. Robertson, as the boy Bertie Thompson, was allowed his first good chance on the London stage.

Associated with this pleasant picture of "Home" was Mr. Clement Scott's delicate and most touching adaptation of MM. Dumanoir and De Kéranion's "*Jeanne qui Pleure, et Jeanne qui Rit*," called "*The Cape Mail*." In this Mrs. Kendal found a part that suited her well, and she played it to perfection.

Yes, there can be cleanly as well as distasteful adaptations from the French. Once when they were playing "*Coralie*" or some such play in Edinburgh, the Kendals received a letter from a punctilious Scotch gentleman deploring their new departure, and begging for a reproduction of that "pure English comedy, '*The Queen's Shilling*.' " He was evidently oblivious of the fact that Mr. Godfrey had taken it from "*Un Fils de Famille*." If some of our living English dramatists continue to "advance" as they seem inclined to do, and as they are certainly encouraged to do, we may ere long startle Parisian audiences with "adaptations from the English."

At the close of 1881 the greatest triumph of the management was achieved. The interest excited by "The Money Spinner" had naturally led to an application to Mr. Pinero for a new play, and when "The Squire" was produced his reputation (it is one that he has right worthily upheld) as the leading English dramatist of the day was established. It was a brilliant success for all concerned, but, as usual, there were two sides to the picture. Against both author and managers a direct charge of plagiarism was made, and their delight was mingled with annoyance.

It was a curious story. When the new play was finished (by the way, it was originally called "Squire Kate") the Kendals and Mr. Hare were acting in Birmingham, and Mr. Pinero went there to submit it to them. In hearing a new piece read it was the custom of the three to listen quietly, making no interruption, but jotting down notes for after-comparison. When Mr. Pinero had finished his task there was a consensus of opinion that the work was an admirable one. But, said one of his critics (and the remark was endorsed by the other two), "Surely it is based on Thomas Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd'?" Emphatically Mr.

Pinero declared that he had never read that charming novel, and that should have ended the matter.

The play was singularly like the story, but those who are conversant with such matters know that such things will occur.

After Mr. F. Anstey had published his clever novel, "The Giant's Robe," he was in the highest quarters roundly accused of having "carefully quarried" it from another novel called "Tom Singleton," and in reply he said: "I never read a line of 'Tom Singleton' in my life; I never even heard the title mentioned until my novel was completely planned and half written; no single incident, character, or situation in it was or could have been derived, directly or indirectly, from 'Tom Singleton.' That there are coincidences, and strikingly close coincidences, between the two novels I cannot doubt, although I confess that I have always shrunk from making the comparison for myself; but that such coincidences must be purely accidental I can say with absolute confidence. By the nature of things it is impossible to prove my assertion; but I venture to hope that my word will be accepted, since I know no reason why it should be disbelieved." By the nature

of things it was impossible for Mr. Pinero to prove *his* assertion, but assuredly he should have been believed.

An odd coincidence of this description came under my own notice not very long ago. I had been spending a summer holiday in a remote English village, and there I learned how a farmer's daughter had "not wisely but too well" loved a handsome scamp of a gypsy ("The Prince of the Gypsies" was his local name), who would prowl about the place for weeks, and, when he had done all the harm he could, disappear for months. The poor girl's story was the old, old story that has been so wonderfully condensed and summed up by Miss Adelaide Procter, and which forms one of Mrs. Kendal's most famous and fascinating recitations:—

"My story is a simple one,  
A very true one too ;  
I had a friend and I was told,  
That he would prove untrue.  
He told me that he loved me—  
And I believed his vow ;  
He went away and left me,  
You know my story now."

But to the sad little history of this luckless village maiden there was a sequel that struck

me as being highly dramatic, and I made careful note of it, thinking that it might be well used for stage purposes.

Last year I saw Mr. and Mrs. Beerbohm Tree in Mr. Louis N. Parker's adaptation of Jean Richepin's "*Le Chemineau*" entitled "*Ragged Robin*," and there, in its entirety—incidents, characters, and situations—was the actual story that I had observed in real life, and of which, I know, no one but myself had taken any note. It was impossible that it should have travelled from the heart of the English Midlands to France, and from thence retransplanted to English soil! It was coincidence—pure coincidence; and I suppose that the truth of the matter is that, if we only choose to look for them, such sad episodes are occurring round and about us every day.

Many of us must remember how in our school-days we were mercilessly called upon to unravel a brain-distracting algebraic problem which asked us how many tunes could possibly be obtained out of the changes to be made on the keys of an ordinary piano. I know it took many sheets of foolscap to arrive at the answer (and I remember wishing that the foolscap had been on my head instead of in my mind); but it could

be and was worked out, and I have ever since wondered if the same ghastly theory could be applied to the events that might take place in fact and fiction.

Unhappily, in the case of "The Squire" and "Far from the Madding Crowd" there was a complication, and through it a great deal of acrimonious letter-writing and bitter feeling ensued. An avowed version of Mr. Hardy's novel had been submitted to the St. James's managers—it had been declined—and shortly afterwards "The Squire," running so nearly on the same lines, was produced.

This gave rise to many unjust accusations, and a brisk but a much-to-be-deplored correspondence in the public press. If Mr. Hare, Mr. Kendal, and Mr. Pinero had been the sort of men to shrug their shoulders, laugh, and say, "This much ado about nothing will give us bold advertisement, and send up the business at the box office," it would have been endurable, but as they happened to be upright and sensitive English gentlemen, they were sorely troubled, and especially so when they discovered that, in spite of their well-won popularity, there existed swarms of those "d——d good-natured friends," mentioned by Sheridan's Sir Fretful Plagiary,



only too anxious to think ill of, and to sting, their fellow-creatures.

That the managers were right in their judgment between the two plays was amply proved by facts. In due course, and with Mrs. Bernard Beere as the heroine, Mr. Comyns Carr's version of "*Far from the Madding Crowd*" was produced at the Globe Theatre, but though its high merits were frankly and deservedly acknowledged, it has not held the stage as "*The Squire*" has done. From the literary standpoint it was irreproachable, but it was not such a good "acting" play.

As for "*The Squire*" at the St. James's, its success was as immediate as it was emphatic. A critic spoke for the public when he said: "The fresh, breezy atmosphere of '*The Squire*' carries us away from the busy world and takes us into scenes of charming rural life. The play is redolent of country air and pure domestic scenes that are a relief from the everyday incidents of a town life, and as hearty and as welcome as they are singularly pleasing."

Mrs. Kendal declares that she loves to play in Mr. Pinero's pieces: she feels that he has an insight into the undercurrent of a woman's mind, and I think he never pleased her so well

(certainly he never suited her better) than when he pictured her as sweet Kate Verity. It was a most difficult part to play, and only a genius could have surmounted one very delicate episode, where the greatest taste as well as the exhibition of the truest womanly feeling were required. If it had not been handled as she handled it the play might have been wrecked and audiences offended; as it was, she hushed her hearers into a tender sympathy that was indescribably affecting. Even the severest of critics now acknowledged that in strong emotional characters Mrs. Kendal had no living rival. Mr. Hare was delightful as an eccentric country clergyman; Mr. Kendal did wonders with a part that, less carefully touched, might have been repellent; and Mr. Wenman, Mr. Mackintosh, Mr. T. W. Robertson, and indeed all the members of the St. James's Company (by the way, it included Mr. Brandon Thomas, the author of "Charley's Aunt," and then a stage recruit) contributed invaluable character studies. Mr. Pinero had fulfilled his desire. Aided by his interpreters, the "scent of hay" was wafted "over the footlights," and the stage presented faultless pictures of English country life.

"The Squire" became as popular in the pro-

vinces as it had been in London, and when the company visited Birmingham a rhymester became so enthusiastic over Kate Verity that he published the following tribute to Mrs. Kendal:—

“ Welcome back again among us, welcome to our town once more,

With your merry smiles to cheer us, as in pleasant days of yore,

When you were a childish ‘ Wild Goose,’ ere you were a  
‘ Wife Well Won,’

When you were a girlish *Pauline*, *Lady Teazle* full of fun,  
Sweet and loving *Ada Ingot*, winsome *Charlotte*, gay and bright;

Cold, romantic *Lydia Languish*, *Viola* afraid to fight.

Ah! as we recall these portraits, those bright evenings spent with you,

Hard it is enough to thank you, hard to give you back your due.

How the mem’ries crowd upon us!—we can conjure up at will

Tears we shed with Countess D’Autreval, laughter loud at  
‘ Uncle’s Will ’—

Laughter that was good and honest, wholesome tears that purify,

And make better those who shed them, while your art they glorify.

“ *Rosalind* is now before us ; *Julia* proud, and *Lady Gay*,  
All these live in minds of thousands, and will live for many  
a day ;

What is this? ‘ A Scrap of Paper?’ yes, and ’twixt our smiles a tear,

*Galatea* is living for us—crowning-point of your career.

Busy Birmingham, the smoky, loves you with its stout old  
heart,  
Loves you for your winning presence, for your triumphs in  
your art ;  
Birmingham is not unmindful, that on days of hard-earned  
rest  
You have given time and talent for its stricken and distress ;  
In its book of local history there is set apart a page  
Where that goodness is recorded, how the queen of  
England's stage  
Came to aid the sick and needy ; and as year succeeds to  
year  
Birmingham will ever thank you, ever hold your name  
most dear."

Of course this is not "poetry" (!), but I like to quote it in proof of my already recorded contention that, in common with other dramatic artists, the Kendals do not know how careers are watched and memories cherished by people who to them will ever be strangers.

And in glancing at this fine gallery of stage portraits, and in thinking of the still longer one that has followed it, one cannot but remember one of Mrs. Kendal's contentions to the effect that the work of an actress is really far more difficult than that of an actor, because she cannot be permitted by "make-up," change of personal appearance, or by mock intonation, to conceal her identity under the cloak of a great

“character” part. No. In the case of a popular actress the public expect and demand the familiar face, voice, and form, and all she has to depend upon is the subtle change of expression.

With the next production at the St. James's came renewed success, and this was all the more remarkable because in Mr. B. C. Stephenson's adaptation of MM. Xavier de Montépin and Kervani's “*La Maison du Mari*,” entitled “*Impulse*,” Mr. Hare found no part that would suit him, and, leaving the chief characters of the play to Mr. T. N. Wrennan and Miss Linda Dietz—most admirably they played them—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal elected to appear in what seemed minor *rôles*. That the play was an absorbing one, and perfectly dealt with by Mr. Stephenson, goes without saying. If it had not been so “*Impulse*” would never have won and, through many succeeding years, maintained its enormous popularity; and yet it was generally admitted that its chief attraction lay in the delicate yet truly humorous comedy acting of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal. In Captain Crichton Mr. Kendal found a great opportunity, and he used it with the skill and moderation of a consummate artist. Hitherto Robertson's Captain Hawtree had been considered the ideal of the “swell”

military officer with a heart of gold and a nerve of steel, yet with a manner that, while amusing enough to audiences, suggested the vague, empty-headed man of society; but Captain Crichton subordinated him to a second place. The bearing, the walk, the talk (with its infectious and well-delivered catch-phrase of "Oh, but I say you are, you are, you know you are!") of this handsome and gorgeously uniformed artillery officer at once caught the eye and ear of the town, and Mr. Kendal deservedly won the honours of the theatrical season. If he had been an actor of a different type he could easily have developed Captain Crichton into a second Lord Dundreary—have subordinated the plot of "Impulse" to his own constant appearance on the stage, and to the delight of laughter-loving multitudes have gone on playing the part for thousands and thousands of times; but, like a true artist, he never for an instant stepped out of the picture; although he must have known that he had the great acting success of the play he let others score as well as himself, and his self-denial was as praiseworthy as his impersonation.

As for Mrs. Kendal as Mrs. Beresford, the warm-hearted and irresistible young widow—as

full of fun as of sound sense and true womanly feeling—she was delightful. The scenes between the Kendals in “Impulse” recalled the happy evenings of “Uncle’s Will” and “A Scrap of Paper,” and the old charm of their dual comedy playing was once more achieved and appreciated. Although in adapting the play Mr. Stephenson had transplanted it to English soil, he made the “villain of the piece”—Mons. Victor de Riel—a Frenchman. This part (it was ultimately very well portrayed by the ill-fated Arthur Dacre) was offered by the Kendals to Frédéric Achard of the Paris Gymnase Theatre, the clever creator of the title-rôle of Alexandre Dumas’s “Monsieur Alphonse,” and the originator of the outrageous Parisian “Bébé,” so skilfully converted by Mr. F. C. Burnand into the decorous London “Betsy.” Achard, who was a very old personal friend of mine, spoke English well, and was desirous of filling the place on our stage left vacant by M. Fechter. Thinking he might be useful to them in the acquirement of French plays, I introduced him to the Kendals (it was through him that they subsequently purchased the English rights in that great Gymnase success, M. Georges Ohnet’s “Le Maître de Forges”), and when they offered him this

important character I strongly urged him to accept it.

But Achard was ambitious. He must be "leading man" or nothing, and declared that "before taking a London theatre of his own," he would tempt fortune on his own account in the English provinces. With this object in view he purchased a drama with a strong and very remarkable plot that had been a marked success at one of the minor Parisian playhouses and gave me the task of adapting it. Of the sequel to this hasty venture I am tempted to relate a little anecdote. With a new Fechter triumph in full view, Achard engaged an English company and boldly booked a tour, and when the adaptation was completed all concerned in the venture were elated with the prospect of a golden harvest. Oddly enough, a strange oversight was committed, and it was only within a week or so of the advertised production of the play in Liverpool that it was submitted to the then Licensor of Plays, the late Mr. Piggott. To the dismay of every one, the license was promptly and curtly refused, and, as Mr. Piggott happened to be a good and kind friend of mine, I was begged to interview him on the subject. I found him (as ever) courteous



and friendly, but absolutely firm, and when I told him that *I* could see no harm in the play (to-day it would easily pass muster), he said: "My dear fellow, I can easily understand that; yours is no uncommon case; you have wallowed so long in the filthy French original that your judgment has become warped and distorted; you can hardly recognise right from wrong." "But," I argued, "my wife, who has never seen the French original, considers this to be a most interesting and thoroughly innocent play."

"Then," said Mr. Piggott, bringing the interview to an end, "if I were in your place, my good friend, I should give up adapting French plays, and *go home and look after my wife!*"

Being pledged to his tour and his company, Frédéric Achard did go the round of the provinces, appearing in several different parts, and being very cordially and generously treated by the public and his critics, many of whom compared him to Fechter. I think if he had persevered he would have made his mark on the English stage, but domestic matters recalled him to France, and he never repeated the experiment.

The next production at the St. James's was "Young Folks' Ways," by that charming writer

Mrs. Burnett and Mr. W. H. Gillette, the well-known American actor-author who has recently made himself so popular with English audiences. In this the lion's share of the work fell to Mr. Hare, who, as Old Rogers, a weakly and hen-pecked North Carolina settler, presented a subtle yet powerful picture of a feeble but warm-hearted man, more or less afraid of his turbulent, exacting wife, but determined in face of all opposition to safeguard the interests of his dearly loved daughter, Esmeralda, a part that was most charmingly played by Miss Webster. As in "Impulse," Mr. and Mrs. Kendal contented themselves with cabinet portraits. As the eager Estabrook and the winsome, cheery Nora Desmond they were voted delightful, but "Young Folks' Ways" lacked the backbone of "Impulse," and shortly gave way to a revival of that hardy perennial, "A Scrap of Paper." By the way, it must not be forgotten that in the Burnett-Gillette play Mr. George Alexander, as the picturesque Dave Hardy, made his first great success on the stage of which he subsequently became, and still most happily is, the deservedly popular chief.

Of the next novelty at the St. James's there is little need to say much, for Mr. and Mrs.



*Photo, by]*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "THE IRONMASTER."

*[Barraud.*



Kendal's impersonations of Philippe Derblay and Claire de Beaupré, in Mr. Pinero's deftly and delicately written version of "*Le Maître de Forges*," entitled "*The Ironmaster*," are still so fresh in the minds of playgoers that they need no description. For fifteen years they have appeared in them to the intense interest and pleasure of both American and English audiences, and critics have fairly agreed that it is among the best serious work they have done.

I think we all love the Kendals best in pure comedy, but thousands of us have shed tears over the rather sombre "*Ironmaster*" and his long-time misunderstood and unhappy bride. The scene where the cold husband carelessly places the costly string of diamonds on his misunderstood and neglected bride's neck, and her hands hopelessly stray up to grasp those that should kiss them, is soul-haunting.



## CHAPTER VII

### *THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESS*

IN the August of 1884 a friend, who was greatly interested in the Social Science Congress announced to meet in Birmingham in the following month, came to me for advice. It was feared by the local committee that the papers promised by the distinguished *savants* who had undertaken to attend and take part in the proceedings, though sure to be clever, were likely to be prosy. They did not want Birmingham to be saddled with the reproach of a dull and uninteresting meeting, and they were in search of some special attraction to "liven it up." My friend's errand was this: "Did I think Mrs. Kendal (who was then as now one of the most popular personalities of the day) would contribute a paper?" I told him that, considering the nature of her engagements, I felt sure such a thing would be impossible; I

absolutely declined to take any part in pressing her to accept such an invitation; and finally told him his only plan would be to make a direct and formal application to her.

This was done, and, finding that she and her husband would be acting in Birmingham during the Congress week, Mrs. Kendal, through sheer good nature, said "yes." The rather despondent committee at once became jubilant; with such an attraction to offer, the difficulty of securing subscribers was at an end, and the success of the gathering was assured.

I write all this to-day because, although on the afternoon of her reading Mrs. Kendal instructed and delighted a brilliant audience, and secured a signal personal triumph, absolutely unforeseen results followed which were aggravating, and it is time that the truth about the matter should be told.

It will be noted that Mrs. Kendal had by no means courted the honour thrust upon her, and I think that as the time for the fulfilment of her undertaking approached she grew a little nervous concerning it. I know that Mr. Kendal thought that with all his wife had to do during an exceptionally busy and arduous country tour it was wrong that she should be asked to add to her



work, but Mrs. Kendal never breaks a promise, and after some consultation a paper was compiled. She really had nothing on any subject that she particularly wanted to say, for, like most fully occupied and level-minded people, the Kendals had never sought publicity outside their own profession, and have studiously "minded their own business," but "The Drama" seemed to her to be the right topic, and "The Drama" was chosen. Now, in the compilation of that paper only one object was held in view. A bright and well-informed address was wanted, and the great thing was to make it as lively as possible. As the devoted daughter of William Robertson, from whose article on "The Actor's Social Position" I have already quoted, Mrs. Kendal naturally holds strong opinions as to the self-respect which should be the keynote of her, as of every, profession, and she is always, when asked, prepared to speak frankly on the subject. But that in this Social Science paper nothing unkind was meant, I *know*. Little foibles, little vanities, the little mistakes to which actors and actresses in common with all man and woman-kind are liable were dealt with, but only from a humorous point of view. Personalities were not dreamt of, and could not be discovered by

the few experts (they included at least two very prominent actors) who read it before it became the property of the public.

On September 23, 1884, the address was given (it cannot be said that it was "read," for, consummate mistress of her art as she is, Mrs. Kendal did not seem to be reading) with a success that I have already recorded. The Right Hon. G. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P., President of the Congress, occupied the chair; he was supported by leading lights; and there was a thronged auditorium.

The paper ran as follows :—

#### THE DRAMA

A PAPER READ BY MRS. KENDAL AT THE CONGRESS OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL  
SCIENCE, BIRMINGHAM, SEPTEMBER, 1884.\*

In dealing with the Drama within the necessarily brief limits of a Social Science Association paper, the great difficulty is to decide from what point of view so large a subject is to be treated. That it should have a place in your discussions seems appropriate enough, for assuredly there never was a time when the Theatre was more

\* This is printed from the original MS. in the possession, and the property, of the writer.

popular, or so much a topic of conversation, as now. The English people are indeed rapidly becoming alive to the fact that the “progress and culture of a nation depend upon its diversions as well as upon its occupations,” and as a matter of consequence the dramatic art is receiving an unprecedented meed of recognition. It appears to me, therefore, that the most useful thing for me to do to-day will be to glance for a few moments at the difference in the condition of the Drama in its earliest days and now, and to consider in what ways it has improved, in what deteriorated. That it has in many ways improved every playgoer of intelligence must admit; that it has in some ways deteriorated those who are closely associated with it are forced to allow.

It is an easy and a pleasant task to speak of its improvements. I believe—nay, I know—that there still exist very worthy but self-constituted critics who speak with shake of head and regretful sigh of what are called the “palmy days” of the Drama. That grand actors and consummate actresses lived in bygone days is a matter beyond all dispute; and indeed, when one comes to consider the conditions under which they were compelled to follow their art, it seems

almost impossible to speak too highly of the genius which enabled them indelibly to stamp their names upon the age in which they lived, and which will cause them to be honourably, nay, gloriously, remembered in ages yet to come. But surely I am justified in saying that the playgoer of to-day possesses advantages far and away above those which his forefathers enjoyed. Let us compare for a moment the playhouses of which we read with those with which we are familiar.

In the old days the utmost disorder was allowed to exist in the half-lighted auditorium. Eating and drinking were freely indulged in; smoking was permitted; wine, spirits, and tobacco were hawked about; card-playing was resorted to between the acts; the more distinguished among the audience were allowed to walk and sit on the stage, and to converse with the performers. It was no disgrace in those days for gentlemen of good social position to be seen tipsy at the play, and of course drunken brawls and disgraceful quarrels were of frequent occurrence.

The entertainment provided on the stage was on a level with the intellect of the audience, and the playgoers were looked upon as "rogues and

vagabonds." No wonder that the Drama got a bad name, or that people with a puritanical turn of mind regarded it with dismay.

Of course all this is going back a very long way, and matters began by degrees to improve ; but I venture to say that it was not until the present generation that correctness in costume, fidelity in scene-painting, and attention to every little detail connected with the action, came to be looked upon as absolutely essential to the proper production of a play.

Nowadays, indeed, that which is technically known as the "staging" of a play is in itself a work of true art, and in its own way gives rise to as much thought and care as the author has for his dialogue or the actor for his part. It has been objected lately that too much attention is apt to be given to scenery, furniture, and accessories, and that there is a danger of the Drama suffering from over-elaboration in this direction. In plain English, this means a thing may be too well done ; and it seems hard to subscribe to such a theory. Our forefathers, you will remember, were content with a background for their plays, on which the name of the place supposed to be represented was written up, such as "This is Thebes," or "This is a forest,"

or sometimes even this trouble was not taken, and the actors had to inform the audience where the action of the piece lay.

“ Our scene is Rhodes ”

is the brilliant opening line given to an actor in an old drama.

These crude arrangements gave way to the introduction of scenery, but it was a long time before anything like correctness was attempted, and we can most of us remember the days when there was no complaint of the thing being “overdone.”

*Can* it be “overdone”? If a scene is to be represented at all, can it be given with too much truth or attention to detail? Of course, lack of judgment spoils everything, and it is very likely that mistakes in this direction have given rise to the complaint. It is useless to lavish mere money on a scene. If the interior of a peasant's cottage is to be represented much expenditure on the furniture would be ridiculous; but surely the artistic care that reproduces the humble home of the labourer, down to such minute details as, say, the “sampler” stitched in silk which his wife had worked when a girl at the

village school, and which now decorates his walls, is a thing to be admired.

Again, if the scene is a landscape, ought it not to be made as true to lovely nature as the resources of art will allow? Or if it is a room in a palace, can it be too beautifully given? If the surroundings and minutiae of such scenes are correct and in good taste they must add not only to the enjoyment but to the *education* of an audience; for it may be reasonably supposed that the frequenters of the less expensive seats in a theatre have not many opportunities of becoming familiar with the interiors of palaces; and it is certain that the jaded City clerk, who seeks a little recreation at the play, does not see too much of landscape, nor has he a very intimate acquaintance with the indescribable attractions of an English villager's home. Perhaps it would be well for those who are disposed to be satirical concerning what they call "over-attention to detail" and "over-elaboration" to give a thought to this side of the question before airing their opinions. It may then, I think, be conceded that in matters of scenery the improvements are not only great but remarkable.

The comfort of the audience, too—is not that

considered nowadays as it was never considered before? For obvious reasons I do not often form one of an audience myself, but I should certainly think that good light, attention to warmth and ventilation, soft cushions, ample room, good music, and, above all, cleanliness, are things to be appreciated and to be added to our list of improvements.

And while advances in this respect have been made before the curtain, equally great ones have taken place behind it, and actors and actresses are at last surrounded by the conveniences and comforts which gentlemen and ladies have a right to expect. For the improvements—the great improvements—that have been made in this way honour should be given where honour is due. It was the Management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre that, some seventeen years ago, first paid attention to the comfort of the artists it engaged, and made the theatre behind the scenes what it now is. This fact should be recorded, because praise is too often given to those who have only followed a good example.

We have more play-writers, too, than of old; and although a cry is constantly going up that there is a dearth of good dramatists, it is a matter of fact that much excellent modern



literary work has been, and is, associated with the Stage.

It is to be feared that the playwright of to-day is hardly appreciated as he should be. His work is subject to keen and universal criticism; for it is a curious fact that, whereas few would venture to criticise books, poems, or paintings without some little special knowledge, every one thinks he has a right to pronounce judgment on a stage-play, and is convinced that that judgment is infallible. And, again, the dramatist runs the risk of being misinterpreted, and consequently misunderstood. His work, moreover, does not find its place on the library shelf, and is seldom read; but the improved condition of the Theatre has made the most famous literary men of the day anxious to identify their names with it; and let us hope that this desire will increase and bring forth good fruit as matters still further improve.

But perhaps the most remarkable change that has come over the condition of the Drama is the fact that there is at last a recognised social position for the professional player. Formerly actors formed a little body to themselves. The Theatrical Profession was considered outside, if not beneath, all others, and

was regarded with something like contempt. It was a wrong, a cruel, and an absurd state of things, for even then the Theatre was popular, and was doing good work. Perhaps you may remember Garrick's famous reply to the bishop who told him that he could not understand why his theatre was always full while his church was always empty. "I think, my Lord," said Garrick, "it is because I deal with fiction as though it were a truth, while you preach the truth as though it were a fiction." Members of all the other professions were glad enough to come and amuse themselves with the outcome of the actor's genius: his ability was recognised; it was, as it is now, the subject of universal conversation and of much newspaper comment; but the door of "society" was closed to him.

Now all that is altered.

The Theatrical Profession is acknowledged to be a high and important one, and the society of the intelligent and cultivated actor is eagerly sought after. Just at present, indeed, the new state of things, having become universally known and recognised, has become also a little embarrassing.

One is always hearing or reading in the papers

that the professions are "over-stocked"—that there are too many clergymen, too many lawyers, too many doctors—and the fact that the terms of actor and gentleman may now be regarded as synonymous seems to have sent the "over-draft" of all these other professions headlong on to the stage.

How many younger sons of well-born but not too well-to-do parents have hailed the present social position of the actor with delight! How many educated girls, finding themselves, through force of circumstances, suddenly compelled to face the world on their own account, have turned with a sigh of relief from the prospect of the stereotyped position of "companion" or "governess" to the vista that an honourable connection with the Stage holds out to them! From these, and from other sources, the Theatrical Profession also runs the risk of becoming "over-stocked."

These young aspirants rush to the Stage as to a promised land. The would-be actors congratulate themselves on the fact that there are no "stiff" examinations to pass; they complacently regard their handsome young faces in the looking-glass; they contemplate with satisfaction the latest efforts of their

West End tailors, and think themselves on the high-road to fame and fortune.

A young man of this stamp not long ago called upon a London manager, sent in his card, and, being admitted to his presence, informed him that he had made up his mind to "go on the stage," and was prepared to accept an engagement. The manager, not unnaturally, asked some questions as to his qualifications for the career which he proposed for himself. "Had he any experience as an actor? Had he studied the dramatic art?" "No," was the reply, "but he had decided to 'go on the stage,' and all that he wanted was an engagement." The manager led him to the door, and, returning his card, pointed to a building on the opposite side of the street. "That," said he, "is a bank; go and present yourself there. Say that, without knowing anything about the business, you have made up your mind to be a banker's clerk, and ask for a situation. If you succeed in getting one, come back here and I will engage you as an actor." The young gentleman took his departure, but *he did not return!*

The would-be actresses are more diffident, and are certainly more disposed to devote heart and soul to their work; but neither the one nor

the other has the slightest idea of the amount of study, of labour, and of devotion to the art—to say nothing of natural aptitude—that is necessary for success.

Another advance that may be claimed for the Drama in these days of its improvement is its influence as a teacher—for a teacher it always has been, and ever will be.

Temperaments differ everywhere, and one of the first things that a boy or girl has to find out is what will exercise the greatest influence over his or her nature. There are many young people who are perfectly content and happy with the amusements that are afforded by study, by a happy home life, and by pleasant social intercourse; but there are also many who require a little more than this, and who can only show what is best in their undeveloped natures under the influence of an appeal to their imaginations. These rush to the Drama as the thirsty wayfarer rushes to the cooling brooklet.

How important it is, therefore, that the draught should be pure, that the refreshment should be really wholesome and useful! It is quite certain that many hundreds—nay, thousands—of people have been influenced for good or for evil by what they have seen portrayed

upon the stage. Those who go to the theatre with the capability of weeping over scenes in which honest self-sacrifice is depicted ; of being aroused to enthusiasm over the success of manly effort or womanly devotion ; or of feeling genuine contempt for the portrayal of meanness, treachery, and snobbery, will come away from a good play, well acted, having learnt a lesson and gained an experience that will probably be remembered with advantage throughout the remainder of their lives. A pure Stage is likely to be surrounded by a pure people, and its influence from this point of view can hardly be over-estimated.

It is worth while here, perhaps, to look upon the influence that the Dramatic Art has upon those most intimately associated with it. The playing of many parts naturally gives to the actor and actress a curious insight into the sentiments and passions that sway and bias human nature. The earnest actor, who has heart and soul in his work, and conscientiously studies the various parts he is called upon to play, is compelled to think, more than the mere man of business, of human strength and weakness, of hate and love, of joy and sorrow ; for in their turn he has to portray them all, and,

to judge by results, the effect upon his nature is to make him very charitable.

Where, I may safely ask, is charity more openly or more cheerfully practised than among the members of the Theatrical Profession? I do not allude to mere almsgiving—the readiness with which an actor will help a comrade who has fallen by the way has become proverbial; but to charity of a very different and more valuable kind.

Clergymen preach forgiveness; but they do not welcome among their own body men whose names are identified with a stormy past, but who would gladly do useful work in a peaceful future. Lawyers have to do with justice; but they look with wary eye on those who have once tripped, and conscientiously warn their clients to have nothing to do with such easily misled and consequently dangerous creatures. Doctors practise the healing art; but their nostrums are for broken bones and bodily hurts: they have no salve for the weary mind or the lacerated heart.

The Theatrical Profession, on the other hand, offers chances to all men and women, no matter what their past has been; and it is in this way that I maintain it to be a more charitable one

than any other. A sad and undeserved consequence of this is, that actors are liable to suffer as a body for the very charities they so unselfishly practise, for they give the outside world opportunities of indulging in that scandal about the Stage which apparently forms one of its chief delights. The puritanical-minded point to some too well-known "backslider" who is endeavouring to earn a living in a theatre, lift up their pious hands in horror, and condemn the whole profession. It would be well, indeed, if these worthy people would take the trouble to look a little further into the matter, and ascertain how cruelly unjust such condemnation is.

In all these things—and if time permitted I could mention many more—the Drama, it may be safely maintained, has not only held its ground, but improved. But I am now quite half-way through the time allotted by the Social Science Association for my paper, and I must turn to the other side of the question, and tell you in what ways the Drama of the present day has deteriorated, and, unless actors and actresses will be true to themselves and the honourable profession that they follow, is likely still further to deteriorate.



No true lover of the Dramatic Art can look with satisfaction on the many ways in which it is now advertised. Neither the painter nor the poet thinks it advisable to fill the columns of the daily papers with the monotonous repetition of what this or that critic has said of his work, or to keep his name constantly, and with wearisome persistency, before the public. The extent to which some carry out this system, and the pains taken over it, is simply beyond all description. An insatiable thirst for newspaper paragraphs is always tormenting them, and in every action of their lives the thought of "How will that advertise me?" or, "How can I use this as an advertisement?" is predominant. With people thus constituted even affliction is turned to what they consider profitable account, and at a dull period an illness is regarded as a positive boon.

This absurd mania seems to be in a great measure, I am sorry to say, peculiar to the members of the Theatrical Profession, and it assuredly does not add to their dignity. It is done in manifold ways—in what are known as "receptions" at theatres, in railway station "demonstrations," by photography, and by speech-making, and one and all are degrading

to the Drama. As a cloak for incapability such means may be excusable, but true art in every branch advertises itself. Advertising nowadays is an art, but it is *not* the art of acting.

This state of things has given rise to a flippant and what may be termed "personal" style of theatrical journalism which is greatly to be deplored, and should certainly be discouraged. The so-called theatrical papers, in which the leading artists of the Stage are alluded to by their Christian names, and where insolent and generally untrue gossip and tittle-tattle take the place of honest criticism, are absolutely debasing to the profession. The unfortunate outcome of all this is, that the artist's capability or, more properly speaking, "popularity," is too often gauged by the amount of publicity that is given to every little action of his or her life. An unthinking section of the public is hungry for news of this description, and incompetent but "knowing" actors and their managers take advantage of it.

Another way in which the Drama has certainly deteriorated is the style of play that now attracts popular audiences. Our forefathers could laugh heartily over a good farce, but the staple fare of the evening had to be the serious

or poetical Drama, in which some good moral would be pointed out, and literary merit would be looked for and found. At the present time, however, audiences enjoy a whole evening of farce, and farce of a very remarkable nature. What, in reality, can be a more painful spectacle than that of an innocent and unsuspecting wife being hoodwinked and deceived by a graceless and profligate husband? Years ago it would have formed the groundwork of a very pathetic play, if not of a tragedy ; but now it is a never-failing source of delight to the lover of elongated farce ; and the greater the innocence of the wife, and the more outrageous the misconduct of the husband, the louder are the shrieks of laughter with which their misunderstandings are received.

For this, alas ! we have to thank our French friends ; and the “ suggestiveness ” which pervades the dialogue of too many modern plays is another foreign importation that might very well be spared. That most of the old plays were indelicate is a matter of fact, but they were a reflection of the times in which they were produced. In those days a spade was called a spade, and plain speaking was not only tolerated but expected. That disagreeable “ suggestion ”

should have taken the place of downright coarseness is a bad sign of the taste of the modern playgoer. Of course there are very clever and very amusing pieces of this order, but their success has given rise to a host of vulgar and clumsy imitations which, while attracting audiences, certainly do no credit to the English Stage.

In what is known as burlesque, too, the modern Theatre has decidedly deteriorated. Genuine travesty and pantomime are distinct and recognised branches of the Dramatic Art; but although some good burlesque pieces, in which witty authors and clever actors unite to create a hearty, wholesome, and good-humoured laugh, are happily produced from time to time, the so-called burlesque with which the modern playgoer is familiar, and which, it must be owned, he seems to enjoy, is not a very high-toned entertainment. I am sure that if fanciful children were taken to these pieces, it would be a real source of sorrow to them to see such trusted friends as "Ali Baba," "Aladdin," "Robin Hood," "Robinson Crusoe," "Sinbad the Sailor," and a host of others, treated so badly.

No one in his senses can blame managers or

actors for catering for this section of the play-going public. A demand naturally induces a supply, and if Dramatic Art has deteriorated in this direction, the public, and not the profession, is to blame.

I do not think that the Press of the present day does all that it might do for the true welfare of the Drama. Existing critics generally rush into extremes, and either over-praise or too cruelly condemn. The public, as a matter of course, turns to the newspapers for information. And how can any judgment be formed when either indiscriminate praise or unqualified abuse is given to almost every new piece that is brought out? Criticism, if it is to be worth anything, should surely be "criticism"; but nowadays the writing of a picturesque article, replete with eulogy or the reverse, seems to be the aim of the theatrical reviewer.

Of course the influence of the Press upon the Stage is very powerful, but it will cease to be so if playgoers find that their mentors, the critics, are not trustworthy guides. The public, after all, must decide the fate of a new play. If it be bad the Englishman of to-day will not declare that it is good because the newspapers have told him so. He will be disappointed, he will be

bored, he will tell his friends, and the bad piece will fail to draw audiences.

If, on the other hand, the play is a good one which has been condemned by the Press, it will quicken the pulse and stir the heart of an audience in spite of adverse criticism ; the report that it contains the true ring will go about, and success must follow. In a word, though the Press can do very much to further the interests of the Stage, it is powerless to kill good work, and it cannot galvanise that which is invertebrate into life. Too many notices are, it is to be feared, written "to order," and the writer who has declined to praise an unsuccessful actor has been known to lose his post ; but let us hope that this unjust state of affairs, together with the "chicken and champagne," of which we have heard so much, is a thing of the past.

And here, I think, attention may be suitably called to a duty that the public undoubtedly owes to itself in this matter of criticism, and that is, that it should judge for itself, and not pin a blind faith on all that is told it. It is too true that if playgoers are told that a thing is good they are quite prepared to accept it as such, without taking the trouble to find out whether they have been rightly or wrongly in-

formed. Thus many plays and many actors and actresses are accepted and praised because the critics have declared them to be good. The fact is, the public does not judge for itself, but is influenced and led by "fashion."

Actors nowadays seem to be judged by everything except by the art they follow, and I maintain that this state of things is peculiar to the Theatrical Profession. Clergymen become popular because they preach good sermons; lawyers have good practices because they advise their clients well; doctors increase the number of their patients in proportion to their professional skill; surely, then, actors should be successful and popular in accordance with the talent with which they act. But acting seems to have something akin to "Parr's Life Pills" and "Holloway's Ointment." By advertising these commodities large fortunes were made, and it is the actor who lets the public know, through the newspapers, everything that he does, from the entertainments that he gives to his friends and admirers, down to the goose that he sends his gasman at Christmas, that seems to get the largest following. "Bunkum" of this description has of late years been practised to an extent which is absolutely nauseating; and all this

proves that there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark."

A complaint is constantly being made that the moral tone of the Drama of the present day is not so high as it undoubtedly should be; but for this playgoers are to blame, for they run after notoriety, and notoriety alone. This may seem a strong accusation, but is it not true? When men and women have done wrong and take to the Stage, is it not a fact that (provided the wrong-doing has been made sufficiently public) brisk business may be expected at the booking-office? This, I maintain, never was in the old days, and proves to-day the degradation of our Stage.

Some critics hold that men and women cannot properly act noble and virtuous characters unless they themselves have led spotless lives. I do not go so far as this, but I do maintain that it is pleasanter to think that when the curtain has fallen, and the actor or actress is at home, he or she leads, or is capable of leading, the same kind of life the representation of which has moved an audience to sympathetic tears; and certainly it can be no drawback if, while admiring the artist, the playgoer can at the same time respect the man or woman.



Surely, then, it is more than a necessity that actors and actresses of position, who have the true interest of their noble art in view, should make their lives an example to those with whom they are associated, and to those who are to come after them. By this means, and by this means only, can the Theatrical Profession expect to maintain its dignity and to secure the high position it should hold in the estimation of the public. It behoves actors and actresses of every degree, while cultivating their talents to elevate and amuse, to lead such lives that those who have regarded the Stage with a suspicious eye will at last give it its proper place in the world of Art.

Time will not allow me to say more. The Drama has an interesting, nay, to some of us a fascinating Past. It rests with those who make it a profession, and the ever-increasing public that supports it, to secure for it a useful, an elevating, and a glorious Future.

At its conclusion the applause was prolonged and emphatic, and every one agreed when Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs. Kendal, said—

“The paper has been a treat and a lesson.

Never was a paper read with more charming delicacy of manner. It was said of Garrick that on the stage he was natural, simple, unaffected ; it was only when he was off the stage that he was acting. Mrs. Kendal's charm was that on the stage and on the platform she was the same. If she had any art she had the highest art, namely, that of completely concealing it. He hoped she might never have a less appreciative audience than the present, or a less-crowded house."

Indeed that day Mrs. Kendal was the recipient of a chorus of congratulation from troops of sincere friends and hundreds of ardent admirers.

Naturally anxious to know that my friend's achievement was properly reviewed in the Press, I turned eagerly to the next day's newspapers. The first two that I opened told me how well her mark had been made.

Said the one :—

" It is not often that the imaginative and the critical faculties are united in a high degree by the same individual. A good painter is too often a very indifferent art critic ; the judgment of a musician on a brother musician's work is rarely free from bias ; and the last person, as a

rule, to whom we should think of applying for a judicial opinion on the modern stage and its influences is a courted and popular actress. Mrs. Kendal, however, who is the honourable exception to so many rules of the profession which she adorns, yesterday established her title to an exceptional position in yet another respect, and furnished new proof of her versatility by the able, thoughtful, and judicious paper on 'The Drama' which she read in the Art Section of the Social Science Congress. The subject is a rather big one to be discussed in a single paper, however masterly, but Mrs. Kendal wisely confined herself to a few practical phases or aspects which had forced themselves upon her consideration in the course of her busy career, and her remarks therefore were not at all of the speculative or theoretical character for those which are commonly thought adequate of the theme. Starting with the undeniable proposition that there never was a time when the theatre in this country was more popular or powerful in its influence than it is now, the fair lecturer proceeded to show that if in one sense the Drama had deteriorated—as we are constantly assured by the *laudator temporis acti*—in another it has unquestionably improved, and

there is real matter for congratulation in the fact that this improvement has not been confined to the Stage but extends to the playgoers, who are no longer the drunken, disorderly, dissolute, rowdy lot to whom the actors were compelled to play in the palmy days of the Restoration."

The other paper told me:—

"Mrs. Kendal's *début* before the Social Science Congress was a success. Her paper on 'The Drama' was read before an appreciative audience, and it deserved the appreciation it received. Eloquent in language and able in thought, the paper was the success of the Congress. Then, too, it was read well. Most of the papers and many of the speeches at the present Congress were singularly unfortunate in being read and made by persons utterly unfit, from an elocutionary point of view, to address an audience. Much has been said in the Art Section about the effect on the voice of proper training. Would that the training had been undergone by those who have read papers and made speeches during the sitting of the present Congress! Mrs. Kendal was an example to all. Her voice was clear and well heard, her articulation plain, and the effect perfect."

Such was the tone taken by all the leading daily papers of September 24, 1884, and Mrs. Kendal and her clever Social Science paper were the talk of the hour. I hope I may be permitted to quote from one more of the many leading articles that appeared, that of the critical and careful *Standard* :—

“ A discourse on theatrical subjects,” said that authority, “ by one of our most eminent and most favourite actresses would be sure anywhere to attract a large audience, and it is scarcely astonishing therefore to read in the reports of yesterday’s Social Science Congress that the meetings of the other departments were deferred in order to give everybody an opportunity of hearing Mrs. Kendal. The interest felt beforehand in Mrs. Kendal’s lecture was quite justified by what she actually said. This talented actress has had the opportunity of studying the Stage from more than one point of view. She has for a good many years—indeed, ever since her first appearance in public—been one of the most popular members of her profession ; she is the sister of the late Mr. Robertson, one of the most successful dramatists of his time, and she is the wife of a highly esteemed actor. She has had experience, too, in managing theatres, and it

must be assumed that she from time to time goes to the play on her own account to view the audience from what is called the ‘front of the house.’ She treated her subject, then, as might have been expected, in a very comprehensive manner; her remarks were nearly always judicious, and often exceedingly happy; while her general conclusion that the Drama is in a more fortunate condition now than at any recent period of its history, is one that nobody with any knowledge of the matter can well contradict.”

Then, a little later, the caustic *Saturday Review* said:—

“It is no disparagement to the lively paper on ‘The Drama,’ read by Mrs. Kendal the other day at the Social Science Congress, to say that its contents were altogether surpassed in curiosity and interest by the circumstances of its authorship and recital. Nothing that the accomplished actress has to tell us as to the change which has taken place in the external conditions under which her art is nowadays practised could half so appropriately—or, in other words, so dramatically—have illustrated her point as the mere fact that she herself was playing the part of instructress to the public at a Social

Science Congress. Imagination loses itself in wondering amusement in the attempt to realise what would have been thought of the scene and its surroundings by any of Mrs. Kendal's famous predecessors of a hundred or even fifty years ago. One is afraid they would have been a little scandalised by it, though that of course would be their fault, and due entirely to the fact that such notions as they had of the dignity, not of their calling—for, as such, it had none—but of their craft, their “mystery,” so to speak, were utterly at variance with our own more enlightened ideas.

“Mrs. Kendal treated her theme as might have been expected, that is to say, with the cleverness of a clever woman, endowed like most other clever women with an intelligence of the acute rather than of the reflective order, and, in consequence, far better worth listening to—as, for that matter, are most instructors of the stronger sex—when recording the results of personal observation, than when attempting to generalise from them. Her paper was of exceedingly comprehensive scope, and left scarcely any side of the subject untouched. The improvement in scenic representation, the rise of the actor in social esteem, the present position of English

dramatic criticism, and dramatic literature in general, and last, but not least, our old friend the moral influence of the Drama, were all successively passed in review. It is, of course, obvious enough that the lady speaks with quite a different kind of authority on the two former of these questions from any she can claim with respect to the latter. She has an expert's acquaintance with stage management, and no one could be better qualified to review the advance of the dramatic artist in social consideration than one who in her own person so gracefully and deservedly illustrates it."

Coming from high sources, all this, and much more to the same effect was, and happily remains, very satisfactory; but soon, to the intense amazement of Mrs. Kendal and her friends, there arose a flutter in certain theatrical dovecots the like of which had never been known.

As I have pointed out, Mrs. Kendal's one object in accepting the invitation of the Social Science Congress was to be obliging, and to give an address that would be at once useful and lively. No doubt it dealt with the little weaknesses of her profession (what calling under the sun has not got its little weaknesses?), but she



never anticipated the publicity that would be given to it, and it was far from her thoughts to wound the feelings of any of her fellow-players. *That I know!* But some of the denizens of the aforesaid dovecots fell foul of every word she said, and looking at things by the light of to-day, it must be admitted that in doing so they fouled their own nests. They looked for points in the poor paper as though they were searching for rusty needles in bundles of mouldy hay. According to them, everything in the address was “personal,” and was meant to be personal, and the supposed targets for Mrs. Kendal’s imaginary arrows were (probably to their very great annoyance) freely pointed out by these “good-natured” busybodies.

And what did they find to carp at, these searchers for poison in Mrs. Kendal’s innocuous address?—searchers as keen as the anti-vaccinators who not only look for, but absolutely hail, virus on the physician’s lancet? Mrs. Kendal had cheerfully given the Bancrofts the credit for being the first to study the comfort of the actors and actresses engaged at their theatre; she had stated her belief that charity was nowhere more openly or more cheerfully practised than among the members of her profession; and

she had spoken of the tolerance given in it to all men and women, no matter what their past had been, who sought employment on the stage—a tolerance that is not too freely exercised in the world at large. She had been generous, nay, she had been urgent in claiming sympathy for her calling, and those who followed it.

But on the other side of the page she had (in all good-humour) suggested that theatrical folk were rather too prone to advertisement—that some writers were wont to deal with their art from a flippant point of view ; that a large proportion of the public in their insatiable thirst for the latest theatrical news deliberately encouraged this condition of things ; that some modern three-act farces were in their “ suggestiveness ” really coarser than the old comedies that reflected the manners of a period at which our “ end-of-the-century ” people affected to be shocked ; that burlesque had deteriorated into mere *spectacle* and flabbiness ; that critics were inclined to be biassed ; that playgoers were to blame for running after notoriety ; and that the members of her profession would do well to uphold its dignity. Unconsciously she was repeating those views of her father which at the commencement of this

volume I have recorded, but with which I believe she was unfamiliar.

Of all these harmlessly expressed and broad opinions a set of curiously irritable people made brick walls against which to knock their supposed to be sore, and certainly thick, heads. They managed to get a hearing, and their plaintive, unnecessary, and at last exasperating yelpings went up as do the howls of a dog to a shining and beneficent moon.

Unluckily these poor envious creatures who (just like our friends the moon-hating dogs) seemed, for no reason whatever, "sorry for themselves," received encouragement from high quarters. In one influential journal that ought to have known—and must have known—better, appeared the following terrible and unjust indictment:—

"I do not think that the members of the theatrical profession, or indeed any persons concerned in the inner life of the theatrical world, would agree with Mr. Shaw-Lefevre that Mrs. Kendal in her recent address had concealed her art. By the initiated the artless artfulness of the lecturer is fully appreciated; every cap fitted, every stab noted, every bitter blow, every sly thrust traced to the head or heart for which

it was intended. ‘She left not Lancelot brave nor Galahad clean.’ The insinuations scattered broadcast by this respectable Vivien are all-reaching.”

Never was there such a grossly untrue charge made, but it set a baying pack upon the trail, actuated probably more by the sport and publicity of the thing than by any real animosity against the unoffending quarry. It would be useless as well as tedious to revive all the baseless and vulgarly expressed innuendoes that were made, but the undignified “Bank Holiday” chase culminated when Mr. Kendal, unable to keep silent any longer, wrote to say that his wife’s allusion to advertisement by illness had no reference to any special actor or actress, and was bluntly told that no one would believe him!

That it *was* untrue—*utterly* untrue—all those who were behind the scenes of that innocent Social Science address could have sworn, but brave Mrs. Kendal insisted upon taking the unexpected and unmerited blame on her own shoulders, and, in spite of urgent offers, would allow no one to come forward in her defence. The consciousness of her own blamelessness no doubt spared her real pain, but the venomous

stings of her coarse assailants must have caused irritation. In the pathetic words of King Lear she might have said—

“ The little dogs and all,  
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me.”

But she preserved her dignified silence until the angry storm had passed away, barely leaving behind it the mud of its own making.

But there were some of us who remembered how Charles Dickens boiled over with indignation at what he considered to be an unwarranted attack on a private reputation. “ When I think,” he wrote to his friend, the great actor Macready, “ that every dirty speck upon the fair face of the Almighty’s creation who writes in a filthy, beastly newspaper; every rotten-hearted panderer who has been beaten, kicked, and rolled in the kennel, yet struts it in the editorial ‘ We ’ once a week; every vagabond that an honest man’s gorge must rise at; every living emetic in that noxious drug-shop, the Press, can have his fling at such men and call them knaves and fools and thieves—I grow so vicious that with bearing hard upon my pen I break the nib down, and with keeping my teeth set make my jaws ache.”

Dickens when he was excited always wrote

over-strongly, and probably in quieter moments would have acknowledged that he hardly meant all that he said ; but it is a fact that a certain class of pressmen do not realise the trouble caused by their thoughtlessly written diatribes. On the other hand it should be borne in mind that the personal paragraphs about actors and actresses that constantly appear in papers, and which to some members of the dramatic profession are so objectionable, would never be written if a prying public did not clamour for them.

In his "Roundabout Papers" Thackeray laid down the golden rule for journalists. "Ah ! ye knights of the pen," he said, "may honour be your shield, and truth tip your lances ! Be gentle to all gentle people. Be modest to women. Be tender to children. And as for the ogre humbug, out sword, and have at him !"

No one accused Mrs. Kendal of "humbug," but the steel that was unsheathed against her was intended to wound her to the heart. With the memory of all this in view, is it to be wondered at if in later days she said some trenchant things concerning journalism ?

## CHAPTER VIII

*ST. JAMES'S THEATRE, 1884-1888*

FOR a long time there had been talk of a sumptuous revival of "As You Like It" at the St. James's, and in the January of 1885, after much earnest thought and careful preparation, it was presented. Probably Shakespeare's beautiful pastoral comedy has never been so perfectly staged. The picture of the lawn before Duke Frederick's palace, in which the wrestling bout took place, was perfect in every detail, and seemed to take the spectator back to the days of Charles VII. of France, in which the Hon. Lewis Wingfield, who had undertaken the adornment of the play, advised his clients to place the action. The forest and woodland scenes that followed were the most convincing of stage landscapes, and about the whole production there was a tenderness not lost upon the true lover and appreciator of Shakespeare.

If there was a mistake it lay in the fact that in his desire to present beautiful contrasts of rich colour in brocades, velvets, and the like, Mr. Wingfield had over-elaborated the dresses. Certainly the followers of the exiled Duke in his forest home, who "killed the deer" and coveted "his leather skin and horns to wear" were a remarkably smart and well-groomed company. But Mr. Wingfield had no doubt idyllically pictured the French "Ardenne," and not the English "Arden" (with which Shakespeare was familiar and no doubt loved), where many of the poet's countrymen, rightly or wrongly, insist on picturing—

"It was a lover and his lass  
That o'er the green cornfield did pass,  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding  
Sweet lovers love the spring."

Surely these must have been the Warwickshire lovers who breathed the flower-scented air between Shottery and Stratford-on-Avon?

The play, moreover, was most delicately and yet, within due limits, mirthfully rendered. Mrs. Kendal played Rosalind with all the grace and charm already spoken of by me in these pages; Mr. Kendal was the manly, picturesque, and



earnest Orlando of yore. Mr. Hare's appearance as, and reading of the very difficult part of, Touchstone was full of interest; all the other parts were in admirably competent hands; but "As You Like It," though it delighted hundreds and hundreds of Shakespearean students, was not one of the St. James's great successes.

The fact is that the *habitués* of that now most fashionable of playhouses had become accustomed to and relished more highly seasoned fare. They wanted modern plays containing a certain amount of excitement, and showing faultlessly equipped drawing-rooms as backgrounds to the actions of society men and elegantly dressed women.

When I took my French friend Frédéric Achard to see this Shakespearean revival he was delighted with the staging and costumes, but, in all seriousness, said, "I find him a bad author!" A little after this I met some friends who I knew were faithful frequenters of the stalls of the St. James's, and asked them what they thought of this, the latest production? "Oh," they said, "we haven't been to see it, and we don't mean to go. It's Shakespeare, isn't it? Yes; well, we went to see a play of his—'Hamlet,' wasn't it, at the Lyceum? Yes; and we were awfully bored.

We don't like tragedy, so what's the use of our going to see Shakespeare ? ”

I assured them that “ As You Like It ” was comedy at its best, and persuaded them to go and see the production with me. Alas ! Alas ! After an almost piteous effort to be interested in it, they quietly slumbered by my side.

The story goes that when, quite recently, Madame Sarah Bernhardt was playing in her French version of “ Hamlet ” in London, a stallholder at the Adelphi asked his neighbour to tell him “ why the young Danish Prince was so furious with his Uncle Claudius ? ” “ Well, you remember in the play—— ” began the response— “ Yes, yes,” interrupted the questioner, “ but it's a long time since I tackled Shakespeare, and I never was too good at reading French authors ! ” Many people of this class exist who are more than half willing to pay their half-guineas for their stalls, but who want in their after-dinner hours to be roused by a more easily grasped and stirring entertainment.

Possibly it was because they realised this that the partners resolved that their next experiment should be an English version of M. Victorien Sardou's “ La Maison Neuve,” which, although it had created a *furor* at the Paris Vaudeville in



*Photo lu*

MR. KENDAL AS "ORLANDO."

*Barrault*

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the far-off year of 1866, had been passed over by the ever-watchful English adaptor as being too strong meat for British digestion. To Mr. Pinero was entrusted the difficult task of transplanting this tabooed fruit to English soil, and boiling it down and sweetening it to suit English tastes, and with marvellous skill and tact he executed it. And yet, even as served up by this master *chef*, "Mayfair," as it was called, proved rather too spicy for English palates. Those who saw "Mayfair" were interested, excited, and even startled, and critics and public alike were loud in their praises of the powerful yet refined acting of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. Hare, and their comrades ; but (worst of all faults in a play) the characters, with one exception, were utterly unworthy of sympathy, and I think that was why few people wanted, however much it had absorbed them once, to see "Mayfair" twice.

Let the great scene of the play be pictured and the reason is not far to seek. Geoffrey Roydant, a speculative and successful young stockbroker, and Agnes his good but society-smitten wife, desert their good friend and guardian in his old-style but substantial house in Bloomsbury for the veneer of the "New House" on which they have set their hearts in fascinating Mayfair. Here the

utterly unprincipled, handsome, Lord Sulgrave makes a friend of the easily flattered Roydant, and deliberately resolves to steal his wife's honour. Featherhead though she is, she has no real thought of wronging her husband, but in affairs of this kind ("woman-stalking" he would probably, as he lounged at his club, call his favourite "sport"), Sulgrave is a man of skill and experience, and he contrives to become an inmate of the home he means in sheer wantonness to wreck. There comes a time when the husband is away, and she, having just returned from some late-houred festivity, is sitting alone in her *boudoir*. There, in her solitude, and in the stillness of the night, the evil-intentioned Sulgrave confronts her. An exciting scene follows, and the man being suddenly seized with an attack of faintness, grasps at a phial of chloral, and, apparently lifeless, falls to the ground. At this awful moment the husband, accompanied by a police detective, unexpectedly returns, the officer wishing to interrogate Mr. Roydant concerning a fraudulent and absconding cashier.

It is a grim situation. In her terror the wretched woman has contrived to conceal Sulgrave's body behind a sofa. With the keen eyes of the detective glancing now upon her,

and now upon her surroundings, she has to strain her nerves to breaking-point to prevent discovery, and when on the first night the scene ended the audiences first gave a great gasp of relief, and then abundantly applauded Mrs. Kendal in recognition of the supreme force of her acting. A powerful situation undoubtedly, but not a very wholesome one—not one in which Mrs. Kendal's warmest and most appreciative audiences liked to see her figuring. In "Mayfair" Mr. Kendal had no great acting opportunities, and his wife shared honours with Mr. Hare, who, as the sound-minded, warm-hearted Nicholas Barrable of Bloomsbury, was delightful. It would be unfair to take leave of "Mayfair" without making mention of the admirable character studies contributed by Mr. C. Brookfield and Mr. Hendrie, and the convincing acting of Mr. C. Cartwright as the designing Sulgrave. Mr. Hendrie's name has recently figured in the bills of the St. James's as one of the clever and fortunate authors of "The Elder Miss Blossom."

In 1899 "Mayfair" would probably have had a better chance than in the comparatively primitive days of 1885. As it was, it gave way to a revival of the ever-welcome "Im-

pulse," in which the Kendals were once more cheered to the echo.

I have always thought that the next production at the St. James's ought to have been a permanent success. It was popular enough at the time both in London and the provinces, but, as far as I know, it has never been revived. "Antoinette Rigaud," adapted from the French of M. Raymond Deslandes by Mr. Ernest Warren (the play came to England stamped with the hall-mark of the Comédie Française), was in every respect a charming work. It might have been made "risky," but its subject was most delicately treated; the story was an exciting as well as an affecting one; the uniforms of French officers and the dainty toilettes of Parisian ladies rendered a series of eye-pleasing stage pictures; and the acting could not have been excelled. The "suggestion" of the play lay merely in the fact that a loving and pure-minded wife was, through force of circumstances, placed in a compromising situation, from which, after some very skilfully contrived situations, she emerged scathless. It is true that one facetious critic was enabled to say, "Indiscreet gentlemen are always coming to ladies' bedrooms at the St. James's Theatre.



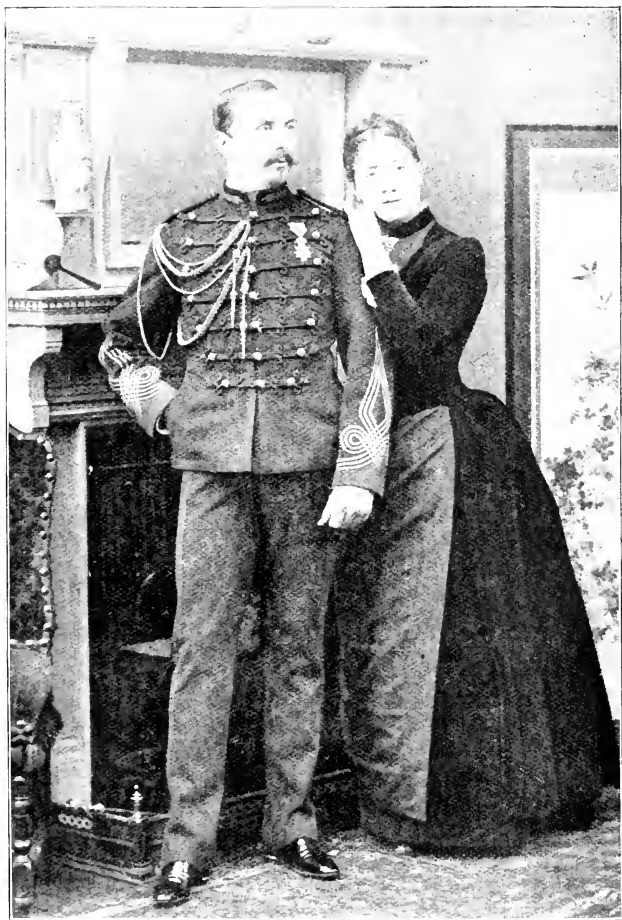
Mrs. Kendal is continually attacked in this unseemly fashion. Yesterday in 'Mayfair,' to-day in 'Antoinette Rigaud.' "

But there was not a dewdrop of harm in poor Antoinette Rigaud, a part that was interpreted with consummate skill by Mrs. Kendal. Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal were both seen to high advantage as General de Préfond and Henri de Tourrel, and the trio were excellently supported by Mr. Barnes, Mr. Herbert Waring, Mr. Hendrie, Mr. Paget, Mr. R. Cathcart, Miss Linda Dietz, and Miss Webster. It was generally acknowledged that, as a whole, the performance had not been excelled in the annals of one of the best comedy companies London had ever seen. Better acting, it was allowed, could not be found at any theatre in Paris.

And yet, though it was only produced in the February of 1886, it was succeeded in May by Messrs. Sydney Grundy and Sutherland Edwards's adaptation in five acts of the "Martyre" of MM. D'Ennery and Tarbé, entitled "The Wife's Sacrifice." This was not a piece likely to have very prolonged hold on English audiences, for in our islands we do not believe that a wife's first duty is not to her husband or herself, but to her father and

mother. Whether we are right or wrong is not for me to say, but it certainly occurs to me that, as set forth in "The Wife's Sacrifice," such a state of things would be at least *unconvincing* to the husband.

In this play it was to save disaster and disgrace falling on her mother's grey head, and to support her father's sense of honour, that Isabelle, Countess de Moray, suffered her mother's son to be shot dead before her eyes, confessing and even protesting that she had a lover, and living alone in disgrace, while her husband, who had been, not unnaturally, divorced from her, contracted a second marriage with a worthless bride. Truly was it said that, had Isabelle revealed to her husband in the second act that secret which is not discovered until the fifth, she would have acted as any common-sense woman ought when her own happiness and that of her husband and daughter are in danger. When the wife who sacrificed herself and her husband from a mistaken sense of duty was admirably acted, a momentary sympathy only was aroused for a mistaken woman. The audience, carried away by the energy and power of the actress, were led into a false commiseration, which was



*Photo by*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "ANTOINETTE RIGAUD."

*[Barraud.]*



immediately shattered after a moment's calm reflection.

It was this fault, no doubt, that militated against the permanent popularity of the play on English boards. Mr. Kendal, as the husband, made a "husband's sacrifice" by once more, for the "good of the house," taking a difficult and uncongenial part. Mr. Hare was able to score in a bright character study, but Mrs. Kendal made the success of the production, and of her acting I will quote a critic, who said: "Mrs. Kendal's interpretation of the Countess de Moray was remarkably fine. In speaking of Mrs. Kendal's performance I use the word 'interpretation' because she is one of the few actresses who aim at giving a complete, consistent rendering of character. She is for the time being the woman she represents. She loses herself entirely in her part, and in this respect she might with advantage be imitated by her younger sisters in the theatrical profession. Her interpretation of the life of this unhappy woman was rich with thought, illuminated by intelligence, and rendered unusually interesting by its completeness. It was not merely striking here and there, but it was all acting should accomplish, a perfectly consistent rendering of character."

By the time a change of programme was required Mr. Pinero was ready with another original play, and "The Hobby Horse" was staged. Because Mr. Kendal found in the comedy no part that he thought he could play to advantage—and Mrs. Kendal was said by some critics to be misfitted as Mrs. Spencer Jermyn—the wiseacres said that "the Kendals had never liked the play." Some time before its production they gave it to me to read, asking me to tell them frankly what I thought of it. When I said that to my<sup>s</sup> notion no more witty or original piece had been written for many a long day, they laughed and with manifest delight said, "Yes! that's just what *we* think!" and then they dipped into it and, with keen relish, quoted its raciest lines. Of course the great part of "The Hobby Horse" was that allotted to Mr. Hare, and, as Mr. Spencer Jermyn, the cheery, spruce, and precise "patron of the turf," now urbane, now peppery, and appropriately nicknamed "Nettles" by his wife, he played with consummate art. With Mr. Pinero he came in for his full share of well-merited praise, but it was somewhat freely contended that in the great scene of the play Mrs. Kendal took her part too seriously.

If one glances at the situation, it is difficult to see how she could read it, or play it, from any other point of view. A true-hearted but wilful young wife, with an intense desire to do good to the poor, rashly undertakes to assist a poor curate in the slums of London, and through force of circumstances has to pass herself off as an unmarried woman. The curate, a perfect type of the manly, self-sacrificing, and devoted English clergyman (how well the Reverend Noel Brice was played by Mr. Herbert Waring !), falls in love with her. She knows that his devotion is sincere, and that by deceiving him she has most cruelly treated him. Could a tender-hearted woman fail to feel and to show remorse ? The truth is that in such a comedy as "The Hobby Horse" the situation was not only an unexpectedly serious one, but a very difficult one for actors to handle. It was one of those copious squeezes of lemon-juice with which Mr. Pinero loves to flavour his bowls of fragrant punch. It is good for all of us that he sometimes dons the cap and bells, but even then he never fails to let us see that it covers a very searching brain.

To say that "The Hobby Horse" was a "piece before its time" is to use a "vile

phrase ” ; and yet I think Mr. Hare found it far better understood when, at the earnest advice of his friends, he revived it a year or so ago. Mr. Bret Harte (it was on the eve of Mr. Hare’s departure to America) wrote to me : “ I have a very vivid recollection of Hare’s delivery of the apology forced from Spencer Jermyn by his wife in the last act of ‘ The Hobby Horse.’ The language is very simple—as Pinero always is when he is most subtle—so simple, I should hesitate to transcribe it ; but Pinero knew that Hare could inform it with the very spirit of the irony he intended, so that it stands out now with Hare’s delivery as one of the most delightful and sarcastic *résumés* of the moral and sentimental situations of a play I ever witnessed.”

But in talking it over with me Bret Harte admitted that John Hare could not have made this great *coup* unaided by the matchless way in which it was led up to by Mrs. Kendal. By the way, it must not be forgotten that for the original production of “ The Hobby Horse ” Mrs. Beerbohm Tree temporarily joined the forces at the St. James’s, and delighted every one, not only by her charming presence, but by her ample appreciation of the whimsically drawn character of Miss Moxon.



In the February of 1887 the highest of compliments was paid to the Kendals. Their artistic excellence, coupled with their personal charm, had not failed to reach the ears of her Majesty, Queen Victoria. In the earlier days of her reign her Majesty had evinced a very keen as well as a very critical interest in the drama, but when, by the sadly early death of the Prince Consort, her life became so changed and overshadowed, she had, together with other recreations, abandoned the theatres. Some good stage fairy must have whispered in her ear that she would do well to see a performance by the Kendals, and to their great gratification they received a "command" to appear before her at Osborne. Thither they went, and a very delightful and gratifying experience they had. At Southampton they were met by a Royal steam launch, and, crossing to Cowes, were from thence escorted to the Queen's beautiful home in the Isle of Wight. There they found a little stage erected for them in the Council Chamber, and right royal hospitality at their disposal.

The play chosen was Mr. W. S. Gilbert's clever two-act comedy "Sweethearts," in which Mr. Coghlan and Mrs. Bancroft had appeared at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1874, and

the Kendals had shone in the provinces. A better selection could not have been made, for, in the right hands, the play gives scope for much quiet humour as well as an infinity of pathos, and as it was preceded by "Uncle's Will," the daintiest of programmes was secured. The third and only other performer in these two plays was that sound old actor, Mr. R. Cathcart. Directly the curtain went up on Theyre Smith's sparkling comedietta the Queen, in no uncertain way, evinced her appreciation, and gave the somewhat nervous actors heart; and so the success of the evening was at once a thing assured. Her Majesty, it should be noted, was surrounded by her Court, and the servants of the household were also permitted to enjoy the entertainment. At the conclusion of the performance the Kendals were presented to the Queen; Mrs. Kendal was cordially enjoined to "kiss hands," and probably for the first time in the annals of the stage actors were made at home in this private gathering of the Court. Her Majesty was more than gracious, frankly saying how much she had enjoyed the performance, and asking many questions that showed how truly her interest had been aroused.

Subsequently when the Queen, having again

offered her hand to Mrs. Kendal to be kissed, had retired, supper was announced, and the heroine of a memorable evening was led in by Prince Henry of Battenburg.

I use the word "memorable" because, although since 1887 many of our leading actors and actresses have appeared before the Queen, it should never be forgotten that the Kendals were the first to be invited, and (by the good impression they created), to most happily reawaken our Sovereign's interest in the stage. And so, having by special desire signed their names in the Queen's birthday-book, the Kendals, full of most gratifying recollections, re-crossed the Solent in the Royal Yacht *Alberta*, and returned to their work at the St. James's.

As a *souvenir* of the occasion Mrs. Kendal very soon received a little parcel, addressed, "To Mrs. Kendal Grimston, from her Majesty the Queen," and within it found a beautifully designed brooch presenting the royal crown studded with diamonds, sapphires, and rubies.

They were especially busy at the St. James's just then, for it had been decided to revive Tom Taylor's fine historical drama, "Lady Clancarty," with every attention to accuracy in the

way of scenery, dresses, appointments, and effects that cost and study, coupled with the latest developments of stage-craft, could suggest. When the play had been produced at the Olympic, in 1874, the audiences were more intent on the impressive acting of Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. W. H. Vernon, Mr. G. W. Anson, Miss Ada Cavendish, and their supporters than upon their stage surroundings. But in 1887 playgoers had become spoiled—the Hare-Kendal management had helped to do it!—and demanded a feast for the eye as well as a treat for the ear, and almost ignored a demand upon imagination. Nay, critics, or some of them, had become so exacting, that the smallest anachronism was pointed out by the expert eye. From these points of view very little fault could be found with “Lady Clancarty” when the play was revived at the St. James’s on March 3, 1887. As far as scenery, dresses, appointments, and stage pictures went, there was nothing but praise from the critics—indeed there could be nothing but praise—but in some quarters it was urged that the theatre was not the right one for such a play, that the audiences who were wont to fill it had no sympathy or liking for an historical-heroic form of entertain-

ment, and certainly the actors and actresses must have been chilled by the gloom with which their fashionable patrons received the most thrilling situations, and the apathy with which the tender speeches and romantic passages were heard.

The fact is that the St. James's audiences did not quite understand it, and the accuracy of the production was thrown away upon them. It has been recorded that on the first night when King William III. led the Princess Anne through the private apartment of the Earl of Portland to see his beloved tulip garden, one occupant of the stalls said to his neighbour, "Isn't this awfully vulgar?" and that this was the general feeling of the stall *habitués*. That the cheaper parts of the house knew better and showed their solid appreciation by reiterated applause is a thing of course.

The piece could hardly have been better cast. In the fine parts of Lord and Lady Clancarty Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were supported by Mrs. Beerbohm Tree (very bright and winsome as Lady Betty Noel), that perfectly finished actress Mrs. Gaston Murray, and by Mr. Herbert Waring, Mr. R. Cathcart, Mr. Ben Webster, Mr. H. Bedford, and Mr. Hendrie. Disappointment

was felt that Mr. Hare did not appear as William III., but he found an irreproachable substitute in Mr. Mackintosh.

In connection with her impersonation of Lady Clancarty Mrs. Kendal acknowledges her indebtedness to critics.\* “When the play was first produced,” she says, “nearly all the criticisms on me were adverse; in some cases the writers—gentlemen in whose opinion I have the greatest faith, and for whose judgment I have the greatest admiration—pointed out most kindly to me where they thought my reading and my view of the character were wrong. First impressions had been made by a very beautiful and extremely talented woman (Miss Ada Cavendish), and I daresay to some extent militated against me—for first impressions always are the strongest, and it is quite right they should be. I felt so instinctively that their criticisms were right, that I worked very, very hard at my part for weeks and weeks. I went on a long tour with it in the country, and tried it in many different ways, and eventually when I returned to reopen the St. James’s Theatre in the winter season with it the

\* “Dramatic Opinions,” by Mrs. Kendal. *Murray’s Magazine*, 1889.



*Photo by*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "LADY CLANCARTY."

*Barraud*





criticisms were most generous and kind, and I was highly praised for the improvement I had made in my part. I cannot now call to mind every instance in which I have remembered the criticisms which have been written about me—where I have instinctively felt that they were right and I was wrong, and I altered my part accordingly. I have great admiration for the writings of some theatrical critics, who, whenever they have to say anything unkind, do so in a very gentlemanly way, and in a kindly spirit, and who, if they praise you, do so to the utmost of their power. This of course is in violent contrast with those critics who are led, more or less, by personal feeling of like or dislike to the artist they are criticising, or with those people who make it a point of turning everything into ridicule, no matter what you may attempt from a high art point of view.”

For a long time the Kendals had held in view a revival of George W. Lovell's play, “The Wife's Secret,” which in the “forties,” with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Mr. Howe, Mr. Benjamin Webster, and Mrs. Keeley in the cast, had been extremely popular. In the country and America too it had proved one of the Charles Keans' trump cards. It is what is known in

theatrical circles as a "man and wife" play, and from that point of view seemed eminently suited to the Kendals. Since their wedding day they have never played apart from each other, and although this rigidly kept rule has often kept the one or the other from accepting a tempting engagement, it has endeared them to the public. They like to know that on the eve of their marriage Mrs. Kendal's father begged them always to act together, that they promised, and have kept their word. They love to see them acting together, and they have an especial fondness for the plays in which husband and wife appear as husband and wife.

"The Wife's Secret" sets forth an interesting story of misunderstanding and reconciliation; the period in which it is set gives scope for picturesque dressing and stage mounting, and for most of the characters engaged in its action it affords excellent opportunities. The time for its revival seemed ripe, and the usual outlay and care were lavished on the production. Indeed, I remember accompanying Mr. Kendal to a fine old Elizabethan mansion in order that he might make accurate drawings of the old oak panelling, window-seats, doorways, and the like, for reproduction in his elaborate set scenes.

On April 9, 1888, the play was presented at the St. James's and behind the curtain all promised well. But in front of it, and long before it had risen, one could hear the ill-omened word, "old fashioned," passed from mouth to mouth. The audience pre-condemned it as "old fashioned," and, in spite of the really fine acting of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Miss Fanny Brough, Mr. Lewis Waller, Mr. Mackintosh, and other members of the cast, told their friends it *was* "old fashioned" and advised them to stay away! *They did*, and after a very brief run the piece was withdrawn. With a little encouragement the Kendals might have put long new life into good old work.

I should think that when she noted these dwindling audiences Mrs. Kendal, for the first time in her own experiences, must have been humorously reminded of one of her favourite stories—that of "Mrs. Smith's Quilt"—which relates how a provincial company on tour, playing for the first time in a small country town, were dismayed at the emptiness of the house. Both play and players were well known and popular, and they were justified in expecting a good audience. Vexed at the neglect shown them, they asked the manager, who had eagerly sought

the engagement, if he could in any way account for it. "Well," he said, "I don't quite understand it; but you see Mrs. Smith was raffling her patchwork quilt last night, and it may be the people all went there!" Mrs. Kendal maintains that a "Mrs. Smith's Quilt" has often been found useful in accounting for empty benches.

In 1888 the partnership of Messrs. Hare and Kendal came to an end, and (to the great regret of the public) with it their occupation of the St. James's. For their closing seasons they presented a welcome series of revivals of their most notable successes, and on July 21st bade farewell to the house which they had conducted with as much credit to themselves as advantage to their patrons.

At the fall of the curtain Mr. Hare came forward, and in a brief but eloquent speech reviewed the work that had been done and thanked the public for their constant sympathy and encouragement. He wound up by saying: "I must also publicly thank the partner whose loyal aid and help I have enjoyed for so many years; Mrs. Kendal, whose talents have shed lustre and given vitality to so many of our productions; and a company many of whom I am proud to count as friends of old standing,

and a devoted staff of officials and servants, for being in a position at this present moment of hoping I may enjoy some portion of your confidence and regard in the future."

Responding to an enthusiastic call, Mr. Kendal said: "For Mrs. Kendal and myself I must cordially and gratefully endorse all that my friend Mr. Hare has just said in acknowledgment of the great indulgence and the most generous support which we have received at your hands during our tenancy of this theatre. We have had more successes and fewer failures than fall to the lot of average managers. It would be an affectation on my part were I to be restrained by any unworthy bashfulness for declaring that for our successes we are principally indebted to Mrs. Kendal. With Mrs. Kendal we have done what we have done; without her, we could, indeed, have done but little. No one, I am sure, will more sincerely endorse this avowal than my late partner, to whose uninterrupted friendship, hearty loyalty, and generous co-operation during our entire connection I now most gladly bear testimony. Next to Mrs. Kendal, we are indebted to the zealous assistance and unsparing efforts of our entire company and staff, who, without exception, have

done their utmost in aiding us to earn the commendation so liberally accorded by our critics, to whom we gratefully admit our obligations. One of the kindest and yet keenest of our critics has said that the partnership now terminated has been productive of much interesting and memorable work. If we have done this, I may frankly say we have realised our highest ambition. In closing a connection of such long duration, and parting from our company, our partner, and the theatre which has been for so many years our home, we have but words of heartfelt gratitude for the past and confident hope for the future. And now, ladies and gentlemen, the time has come to say, in this place, farewell. We separate from our recent associations with no inconsiderable pain. Ties such as we have maintained with the St. James's Theatre through all these years are not broken without regret. We go each our own way, with no shadow of rivalry save the worthy rivalry of striving each for himself and herself to earn a continuance of your favour, and to sustain the honour of our profession."

And so this bright chapter in dramatic history came, as all things do, to an end. We would fain have had it a longer one, but beneath it the

stage historian had to write the generally painful word—

“FINIS.”

But it lives in the memory of thousands, and it by no means exhausted the theatrical triumphs of Mr. Hare and the Kendals, who were probably never more popular than they are to-day.





## CHAPTER IX

### *AMERICA*

WHEN, soon after the termination of the partnership with Mr. Hare, the Kendals announced their intention of playing in America, there were plenty of croakers ready to prognosticate failure. "It was too late for such a venture," they said; "all their best plays had been done there; other English actors and actresses had gone out and failed; and how did the Kendals know that their style of acting would suit trans-Atlantic playgoers? Oh no! It was a most unwise expedition, and no doubt they would live to regret it." Naturally modest, the Kendals had their own misgivings, but that most astute, cool-headed, and charming-mannered of American managers, Mr. Daniel Frohman, under whose guidance the engagement was to be fulfilled, would reassure them with his confident smile and his quiet

remark : “ Leave it all to me. I know America, and it’s quite big enough to take care of you.”

Of course their English friends could not let them go away without a “ God-speed ” and an affectionate *au revoir*, and a committee of those most intimate with them and who held their welfare at heart was quickly formed. In England no celebration is complete without a dinner, and their deliberations resulted as follows :—

FAREWELL BANQUET  
TO  
MR. AND MRS. KENDAL,  
PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE FOR AMERICA.

---

THE RT. HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.,  
*Chairman.*

---

*Tuesday, July 16, 1889.*

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**Whitehall Rooms :**  
THE HOTEL METROPOLE, LONDON.

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**COMMITTEE :**

|                               |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| The Earl of Radnor.           | A. W. Pinero.  |
| The Earl of Fife.             | W. G. Cusins.  |
| The Earl of Londesborough.    | Arthur Cecil.  |
| Lord Cranborne, M.P.          | Beerbohm Tree. |
| Lord Rowton.                  | Frank H. Hill. |
| Sir Hy. James, Q.C., M.P.     | Joseph Knight. |
| Sir Chas. Russell, Q.C., M.P. | A. W. Dubourg. |

COMMITTEE (*continued*).

|                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sir A. K. Rollit, LL.D., M.P.  | Walter S. Bailey.              |
| Sir William Dalby.             | Arthur Rollit.                 |
| Sir C. Forster, Bart., M.P.    | Robert H. Wyndham,             |
| Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., R.A. | Frank D. Finlay.               |
| Sir Henry Edwards.             | P. Hardwicke.                  |
| Charles Hall, Q.C., M.P.       | Edward Ledger.                 |
| Horace Farquhar.               | L. Sterne.                     |
| Edward L. Lawson.              | T. Edgar Pemberton.            |
| Frank Lockwood, Q.C., M.P.     | Montagu Williams, Q.C.         |
| F. A. Inderwiek, Q.C.          | Lennox Browne, F.R.C.S.        |
| John Hare.                     | Alexander Dennistoun.          |
| Dr. Quain.                     | Edmund Routledge.              |
| Maclaine of Lochbuie.          | Marcus Stone, R.A.             |
| John L. Toole.                 | H. Brackenbury, C.B., Lt.-Gen. |

## LIST OF TOASTS.

“THE QUEEN.”

“THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES AND THE  
ROYAL FAMILY.”

“OUR GUESTS: MR. AND MRS. KENDAL.”

Mr. Kendal will reply.

PRESENTATION TO MRS. KENDAL.

Mrs. Kendal will reply.

“THE DRAMA.”

Proposed by Sir. Chas. Russell, M.P.

Mr. J. L. Toole will reply.

“THE CHAIRMAN AND MRS. CHAMBERLAIN.”

Proposed by Mr. John Hare.

The Chairman will reply.

*Selection of Music by The Bijou Orchestra.*

*Conductor: Mr. J. Poughér.*

Concerning the choice of a chairman there had naturally been much discussion, but assuredly no better man than Mr. Chamberlain could have been chosen. Then (as he is now)

he was one of the most prominent of our statesmen; he was then (as he is now) in sympathetic touch with America; he had recently married a charming and most gifted American lady, who had immediately won a front place in and endeared herself to not only the highest of social circles, but to all English folk with whom she came in contact; he was as good and genial an after-dinner speaker as he was an impressive political orator; and he had always taken an ardent interest in the drama.

How keen that interest had at one time been no one who entered the Hotel Metropole on the evening of July 16, 1889, knew better than myself. In the course of the proceedings (it was in his happy response to the enthusiastically received proposal of his own health) he said: "I do not believe myself that there is anybody here who can say, as your chairman can proudly say, that he has written a comedy which had the honour of being submitted to the late Mr. Robson, and by him immediately rejected as totally unsuitable for his own or any other stage."

This was said laughingly, and excited laughter, but Mr. Chamberlain once told me how, in his

young days, he had earnestly hoped to become a successful dramatist, and had been disappointed as one by one his pieces were rejected. When I suggested that no doubt they would be accepted now, he smiled and implied that in that direction his ambition had been lived down. Then, in his early Birmingham days, he had been a most accomplished amateur actor, and many people still talk of the excellence of his performances at the house of his friend, Mr. C. E. Mathews, the famous mountaineer and one of the founders of the Alpine Club—Mr. Mathews, by the way, used to “mount” his bijou productions with singular care and taste—as Puff in Sheridan’s “Critic” and Young Wilding in Foote’s “The Liar.”

Certainly there could have been no better president of the Kendal banquet than Mr. Chamberlain; and as in Mr. Frank Dalzell Finlay (known to every one and popular with every one in leading political, literary, and artistic circles) an enthusiastic honorary secretary was found, the success of the enterprise was a thing assured. The handsome Whitehall Rooms of the Hotel Metropole looked especially bright when on the evening of the entertainment Mr. Chamberlain took his place. To the right

and left of him were Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, to the right and left of them were the Earl of Londesborough and Mrs. Chamberlain, and the other occupants of the seats at the high table were Mr. and Mrs. John Hare, the Dowager Marchioness of Waterford, Lord Rowton, Lord Ardilaun, Sir Joseph Fayrer, Sir C. Russell, Q.C., M.P., Lady Bruce Seton, Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A., Miss Geneviève Ward, Sir Morell Mackenzie, Mrs. Brydes Williams, Lady Ardilaun, Mr. F. C. Burnand, Lady Russell, Sir Bruce Seton, Lady Morell Mackenzie, Sir A. K. Rollit, M.P., Lady Colville, the Hon. Mrs. Lawrence, the Hon. C. Lawrence, Sir Arthur and Lady Blomfield, Sir Frederick Smythe, Sir F. Goldsmid, and Sir Henry Edwards. At the seven tables that, horseshoe fashion, spread from the high table were nearly two hundred well-known ladies and gentlemen, all personal friends of the Kendals, and all right truly wishing them success.

When Mr. Chamberlain rose to propose the toast of the evening he found a good-humoured, expectant, and appreciative audience, anxious to listen to him; and in his usual deft way he made a speech exactly suited to the occasion.

“I have now the pleasure,” he said, “of pro-

posing the toast of the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, whom we shall accompany with our best wishes on the occasion of their first visit to our cousins across the water. I am very grateful to the committee for having made me your mouthpiece on this occasion, although I am prepared for the expression of some surprise that such a distinction should have been conferred on a mere politician, whose professional avocations have so little in common at first sight with the art to which our guests have devoted their lives. Ladies and gentlemen," he continued after the interruption of laughter, "I see that you have anticipated me. That is the first impression, and it is a hasty and inaccurate one, because the drama which has been progressing for so many centuries on the boards of St. Stephen's, which has had the longest run of any play, and which has excited a certain amount of popular interest and appreciation, justifies my presence here to-night.

"I claim for the House of Commons that we also are the abstract and brief chroniclers of the time—not so brief as we might be, but that is a detail—and at least among our members you will find the most versatile actors of the day. Each man in his time plays many parts; all styles

and all branches of the profession are represented. We have those who 'tear passion to tatters'—to very rags—and we have others who are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-show and noise. We have our leading gentlemen, our heavy fathers, our light comedians; and there are clowns who forget the injunction of Hamlet, and who set out to make a certain quality of spectators laugh, although some necessary questions of the play have at this time to be considered. Ladies and gentlemen, you will see that there is a competition between St. Stephen's and the legitimate drama, and that may perhaps account for the fact, which I deplore, that when, occasionally, the Legislature concerns itself with the dramatic profession, it does so in a certain spirit of criticism and suspicion which is altogether unworthy of the subject. . . .

“ I have thought sometimes that, with all our advantages, the tendency of the age is to too great monotony, and that therefore we ought to welcome anything that relieves our somewhat ordinary but colourless existence. The imagination of men has to be cultivated as well as their material existence provided for, and the imagination of men grows on the creations of genius, which are, in many cases, developed for us and





*Photo by*

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "DIPLOMACY" *Winton & Gray*

© 1901



interpreted by the skill of the actor. It is the actor who clothes the creations of genius, who gives them life, and who impresses upon the hearts and minds of men the thoughts and words of the greatest writers of all time. I know it has been said by a somewhat jaundiced critic that an actor is a man who repeats indifferently a portion of a tale invented by another; but you will agree with me that that is a very imperfect and insufficient definition; and that every true actor imparts something of himself to the creations that he illustrates, that he supplements and completes his author; and I think it is probable that some of the greatest literary possessions we enjoy, possessions of all time, the heritages of the ages, would never have seen the light but for the certainty that they would find competent and skilled interpretation in the genius of the actor.

“I can understand how in these circumstances in other times and other countries the State has not thought it beneath its duty to foster and mature the stage and encourage it by material aid and support. Here, according to our wont, we leave everything to individual effort. We have left it to the actors themselves to maintain the best traditions of the English stage, and you

will agree with me that foremost among living actors our guests have done what in them lay to uphold a lofty and worthy ideal. The school of English comedy, the school which holds the mirror up to nature, and which has depicted for us with so much grace and simplicity the passing incidents of contemporary life and manners, has had no more delicate and no more intelligent exponents.

“If there are any persons still who think that staginess, that a mannered gait and presentation are essential consequences of taking to the boards, let Mr. and Mrs. Kendal undeceive them. They have been, I think I may say, nurtured on the stage; all their lives have been inseparably connected with it. We may also say that there they have gained their education; that they learned their letters in the ‘flies,’ and I believe it is historical that they pursued their courtship at the ‘wings.’ Since then they have been constantly before the footlights, yet they remain what we know them—the frank and natural, the courteous and kindly English lady and gentleman. The esteem in which they are held on this side of the water may be judged by this gathering, one of the most representative that I have ever had the honour of attending.

“ Here are brought together representatives of the professions of the law, of divinity—I am glad to say—of medicine, politics, and judicial luminaries, and not least some of the ablest and foremost representatives of the profession which our guests themselves follow. We are met here to honour them. We are met here to show our respect for their private worth and character, as well as for their public abilities ; and we bespeak for them kindly welcome from our kinsfolk—our American cousins. We are confident that their talents will justify our commendation, and will ensure a happy result to the new enterprise in which they are embarking. I propose to you, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen—‘ The health of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal.’ ”

It need not be said that these happy remarks were constantly interrupted by applause and other tokens of approbation, and that when Mr. Kendal rose to respond to them he was received with loud cheering.

“ Although I earn my living,” he said, “ by speaking in public, public speaking is by no means my strong point. I am so accustomed to have words found for me—words infinitely more choice than I could find for myself—that on this occasion I am indeed much at a loss ;

for it would require a copious selection of all the most grateful phrases in the English language to express, even in an inadequate manner, the feelings with which Mrs. Kendal and I are inspired by this most remarkable and most significant manifestation of your friendship and regard. That such a number of our personal friends should have assembled this evening to wish us God-speed on the long journey which is before us, is indeed a practical proof of affection and good-will, of which we may well be proud, and by which we are certainly most deeply touched. We see around us many old friends who have for years rejoiced with us when we had reason to rejoice, and sympathised with us in our times of trial. We see many, in various positions of life, who have encouraged and sustained us with unfailing generosity ; have aided us with their counsel, and have sometimes corrected us when we were wrong with wholesome criticism and needful admonition. We see also, to our delight, many staunch friends in our own profession who have come here to-night to join in this demonstration and to give us a practical assurance of their friendship ; dramatic authors, too, to whose talents we are indebted for many plays which we have been able success-

fully to interpret. These long rows of friendly faces bring back the memories of many a first night of a new piece, when the anxiety with which we were naturally filled was relieved by your kindly encouragement and your generous consideration.

“ I shall not pretend to say that in the enterprise which we are about to undertake we are entirely free from anxiety. It is no small matter for us to cross the broad Atlantic with a theatrical company and their equipment, and in a fresh and untried country appeal to the verdict of a new audience. But our venture is cheered by this signal manifestation of your cordiality and good wishes, which are even already endorsed by most sympathetic assurances of welcome that have arrived from over the sea. Naturally we are most anxious that our visit to America should be a success, and to attain that end we shall devote all the abilities we possess, all the resources we can command, and such experience as we have gained in the course of our professional life. It is our ambition not only to succeed in pleasing the American public, but in upholding and extending the repute of the British dramatic profession.

“ If anything, sir, could enhance the gratifica-

tion and pride of this moment, it would be your presence in the chair on this, to us, one of the most interesting social events of our lives, and the presence also of the accomplished lady who bears your name. Her presence here this evening we accept as a happy augury of our reception in the great country which is the land of her birth. To the kind and generous and all too flattering words you have used in reference to us, I am, as I have said, wholly unable to make an adequate reply; but they have sunk deeply into our hearts, and will never be forgotten. I have never felt my incapacity as a speech-maker so thoroughly as I do now. I would fain give suitable expression to what I feel and what I know my wife feels at this moment. I can only say to this most brilliant assemblage, to the distinguished statesman who presides over it, and to every one who has taken part in organising this magnificent entertainment, we offer our truest, our most sincere, and our most grateful thanks; and we trust that on our return from America we shall find that we have done nothing to forfeit your esteem or to lessen your affectionate goodwill."

When the applause which followed this manly and well delivered speech (Mr. Kendal had no



occasion to apologise for his oratory) had died away, Mr. Chamberlain again rose and said :—

“ I have now to complete these proceedings with the performance of a most pleasant duty. It is to ask Mrs. Kendal that she will be pleased to accept this jewel as a slight token of the regard of her friends. It is a testimony of our gratitude to her for the many pleasant hours we have spent in listening to her. It is a recognition of the brilliant creations of her genius which will always be inseparably connected with her name. In times not so very far removed from us the profession of the actor had fallen into temporary disrepute, and we read how the most gifted French actress of her time, although fêted and adulated in her public career, was yet the subject of social exclusion during her lifetime, and at her death was denied by churlish priests the rites of the Church to which she belonged. And, if now, evidences of such bigotry and intolerance have almost disappeared from amongst us it is largely owing—chiefly owing—to those who, like Mrs. Kendal, have shown how to combine the virtues of the woman with the talents of the actress, and who have ennobled the profession to which they belonged

by the personal dignity and by the weight of character which they exhibited. Therefore it is to the woman, as well as to the actress, that we pay our homage. We ask you, Mrs. Kendal, to accept and to wear this slight memento of our esteem ; and we couple it with a most earnest and sincere wish of many years of honoured life and continued happiness."

Mr. Chamberlain then handed to Mrs. Kendal a beautiful diamond star, four inches in diameter, formed of very pure and brilliant stones, mounted in a blue velvet case with the inscription :—  
"Presented to Mrs. Kendal by her friends :  
July 16, 1889."

How Mrs. Kendal was received when she rose to tender her thanks may easily be imagined. For a moment the heartiness and manifest affection of her friends seemed almost to overwhelm her, but she soon took courage, and, in the voice many of us have learned to love so well, said :—

"In what words can I convey to you the expression of my gratitude? I thank you all, again and again, not only for your beautiful gift, but also for the flattering words that have accompanied it. The intrinsic value of your present, great as it is, is of less account in my

eyes than the kindly feelings that have prompted its offering, and not the least gratifying feature in connection with it is the knowledge that much time and thought have been devoted to it by my friends and *confrères* who have little of either to spare. I may have my own opinion, as others may have theirs, as to whether I merit all that has been said of me in this room to-night ; but one thing I may say, that however much our past efforts may fall short of the praise accorded them, all my future shall be devoted to my endeavour to deserve them.

“ My husband, and the members of our company, and my poor self, are about to appear before new and critical audiences. In the face of such an ordeal to come, it is a great and valuable encouragement to know that we are bearing with us the good wishes of those who, although we are privileged to call our friends, are not the less impartial judges. It is to me a happy omen that among those who are here to wish us God-speed is Mrs. Chamberlain, who comes from one of the most cultivated and intellectual cities in the United States. When I recall the welcome extended on the other side to my brothers and sisters in art, and the appreciation shown on this side of the visits of our

American colleagues, I am emboldened to feel very sanguine as to our venture. Though in America the canons of artistic taste are exalted and exacting, there is always a kindliness which will condone our shortcomings.

“I know not whether Mrs. Chamberlain, who has done so much to draw the two countries together, will consent to view the exchange of artistic visits as international incidents. The two countries are united not only by blood and kinship, but by artistic sympathy and interests, in those domestic bonds of which we have a happy instance here to-night. I fear I have spoken too long, but the circumstances must plead my excuse. With such surroundings, such cordial encouragements, such dear old friends in public and private life, a woman may well be forgiven for departing from the silent habit of her sex. Let me again thank you and assure you of my gratitude for this lovely gift, which I shall treasure and wear with pleasure and with pride—

“ ‘ So if your friendship keep us in your view,  
And if remembrance die not in your heart,  
There will be less of sorrow in adieu,  
And this farewell be healèd of a smart.  
Seas may divide us then, yet sunder not—  
They are not absent who are not forgot.’ ”

Mrs. Kendal's speech and her perfect delivery of these lines not only delighted her listeners—it absolutely moved them. Nothing could have been better or more exactly suited to the occasion. Then followed excellent speeches by Sir Charles Russell, Mr. J. L. Toole, Mr. John Hare, and a memorable evening came to a close.

In due course the Kendals crossed the Atlantic, and their English friends waited anxiously for news of their first appearance and reception in America. They had not long to wait. It came quickly, and in the best possible form. Success! Supreme and unmitigated success! That was the message that the cable brought us, and when we received the fuller reports of newspaper and letter, it was evident that the Kendals had at once jumped into the hearts of the American people. They may have been familiar with most of the pieces in which they appeared, but the charm of their acting made them new to them. The refinement and delicacy of their art appealed to them; they understood and appreciated the lightness of their humour and the tenderness of their pathos; they crowded the theatres in which they appeared, they sought their society and showered upon them compli-

ments, congratulations, and marks of honour and regard.

Mrs. Kendal at once became the reigning favourite both of men and women of all classes ; and with regard to Mr. Kendal, a matter occurred that gave infinite pleasure to his English friends and comrades. In London he had, in the Buckstone days, been known as a rising young actor at the Haymarket, and step by step, and almost imperceptibly, his art had ripened and matured ; but, as we have seen in these pages, he had, through manly loyalty to his wife, often contented himself with comparatively mediocre parts. This state of things had become accepted, and many of us had felt that it was never really seen how well he was playing, or how seldom he got his full measure of justice. It was a difficult position to alter, for Mr. Kendal is the last man in the world to blow his own trumpet, or to encourage others to do it for him. In America he was a new man, and both critics and the public at once hailed him as a perfect actor. “ Why have we not heard more of him ? ” was the question asked by every one, and no one was more gratified by this spontaneous expression of opinion than Mrs. Kendal. Mr. Kendal took it, as he does all things, very

calmly and modestly, maintaining his ground and constantly increasing his popularity.

Of their first night in the new country I must let a famous American writer on things theatrical speak, and he must do so in his own characteristic way. His head-lines, which run as follows, are reassuring :—

#### NEW YORK LED CAPTIVE.

UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS OF MR. AND MRS. KENDAL.

The ice broken and the public is theirs—The audience particularly charmed by the personal magnetism of Mrs. Kendal—"A Scrap of Paper."

But, as any one who reads the following will see, the artists must at first have had their moments of misgiving and cruel anxiety.

Breaking the ice (says my authority) was the operation Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were called upon to perform on the occasion of their first appearance before an American audience. Something of the autumnal chill that reigned in the clear moonlight outside seemed to have crept into the auditorium of the Fifth Avenue Theatre when the curtain arose on Sardou's familiar and most ingenious comedy of "A Scrap of Paper." The house was crowded to the doors, familiar "first night" faces were seen on every side, and

although fashion was less generally represented than it will be later in the week, art and literature made an excellent showing.

But in spite of the evident disposition to extend the heartiest of welcomes to the distinguished strangers, the atmosphere of the place throughout the greater part of the first act was glacial, and fairly rivalled in reserve the famous Alpine chilliness said—by malicious enemies, no doubt—to be characteristic of the first night assemblages of the modern Athens. Gradually, however, this reserve gave way beneath the genial influence of Mr. Kendal, who received a warm reception the instant the audience espied the face and figure of the representative of Prosper Couramont, re-named in this thoroughly anglicised version, Colonel Blake. Those familiar with the peculiarities of a New York first night audience began to see that the spectators had taken kindly to the cheery personality and eminently natural style of the—to them—new English actor.

Still, however, the ice refused to yield entirely ; it was evident that the audience was waiting for somebody. Unsophisticated spectators thought that they had espied that “somebody” when the young lady who assumed the character of



Lady Ingram made her appearance, and Miss Violet Vanbrugh was favoured with a "reception" which at the beginning was intended by a small contingent for the famous "somebody" the first nighters, "extra dry" and *frappé* on ice, so to speak, were evidently waiting to welcome. Sardou's first act, which expounds the motive of his play, draws near its close; the approaching arrival of a

## CERTAIN MISS SUSAN HARTLEY

has been mentioned about the middle of the act, and still no Susan, black-eyed or otherwise. Mr. Kendal, cleverly aided by Miss Violet Vanbrugh, and by Henry Irving's former assistant, Mr. Wenman, is doing his best to lay the ghost of New York's idol and canonised saint, the late John Lester Wallack, when there is a voice from the back of the stage, a familiar voice to many, but now strangely faint and tremulous throughout its silvery tones, and the "somebody" steps for the first time before an American audience. The traditional "thunders of applause" await no further signal than the entrance of Madge Robertson Kendal, who, all alive with intense nervousness, bows, and finally kisses her hands to a welcome truly royal.

Have you ever seen the frost on the ground melt under the rays of the sun? The comparison is the only one that can convey an idea of how the morgue of one of the coldest first night audiences on record yielded to the charm invariably exerted throughout her career by this fortunate actress. For a few instants, to be sure, this generous "reception" finally at an end, the assemblage gave itself time enough to make up its mind and exercise the independent judgment characteristic of Americans in every relation of life. But the celerity with which our country people do things is as pronounced as their refusal to have their minds made up for them by the verdict of "effete monarchies," and this particular audience lost not a moment in deciding that they liked Mrs. Kendal enormously and that Mr. Kendal was alike "the man for their money"—and their applause.

To not a few people present it seemed a curious thing to behold Mrs. Kendal, even for a moment, the object of inspection and critical estimate by a whole body of playgoers. Those who had followed her throughout any of the phases of her rich artistic career experienced a singular sensation in separating the reigning

favourite of the English stage from the *débutante* in a new country. Was she nervous? Was Ellen Terry nervous as she came into view as the queen of Charles I. in the mimic grounds of Hampton Court at the Star Theatre? Was Helena Modjeska troubled when she staked her artistic future on a first appearance in London? The voice in which Mrs. Kendal spoke Susan Hartley's first words to the effect, "Well, here I am at last!" sounded faint and far away, and doubtless seemed in her own ears like the voice of another person; but the

## LONG-CONTINUED RECEPTION

that broke out on her appearance, and refused for some moments to die away, must have convinced her that she was in the house of her friends, and once the plunge into this cold bath of footlights and audience was over, the consummate actress asserted herself. The nervous tension apparent on her entrance was, moreover, an advantage, for seldom, never perhaps, has Mrs. Kendal played better. "This audience is going to have a treat" was the verdict of those familiar with the methods of the actress as the curtain fell on the first act. Already the ice had melted,

not a trace remained of it, and when Susan Hartley opposed her woman's wit to man's cunning as she took Colonel Blake's arm to go into luncheon, a couple of warm recalls said "We like you!"

Thus far the audience had seen a charming woman, admirably well dressed, a sympathetic and essentially natural actress, who struck at once the keynote of the personage—an English spinster. Miss Susan Hartley, mistress of arts, replaces in this version the woman of the world of Sardou. The distinction is delicate, but the opportunity is there, and Mrs. Kendal has yet to miss an artistic opportunity. With the second act comes, however, the chance for a veritable *tour de force*. The present writer,\* to whom Mrs. Kendal's acting in this particular part was a novelty, has seen "Les Pattes de Mouche" played in the original French, not only by a troupe headed by an excellent actress, Madame Juliette Clarence, but at the Comédie Française itself by Madame Blanche Pierson, with Coquelin as Prosper, and in English at Wallack's Theatre by Lester Wallack and Miss Rose Coghlan; but the second act had not gone far before it was evident that one

\* Writing under the *nom de plume* of "Walsingham."

who had not witnessed Mrs. Kendal's Suzanna—or Susan—had never seen Sardou's comedy either in the original or the adaptation. For the acting of such clever women as Rose Coghlan and Blanche Pierson is mere child's play, art in its swaddling clothes, compared to the achievement of the gifted *comédienne* who was Madge Robertson, and on this occasion every resource of her temperament and training sprang into play.

The act is to some extent a monologue, since Susan Hartley never leaves the stage from the moment she enters until the curtain falls. The part is therefore peculiarly difficult; it demands an infinite variety, or else it would be tedious. Mrs. Kendal is fully equal to the occasion. She embellishes the hunt after the "scrap of paper" with the most brilliant variations of pose, voice, facial expression, and gesture. The use of her hands, for example, is simply eloquent. Her execution of the hysterical speech, punctuated with the nervous query "Don't you see?" would alone stamp her as *a great actress*, and so natural is she at all times that she never seems to be "making points" after the crude fashion of inferior actresses. Considered as a whole, her per-

formance of this marvellous second act, which seems easy enough, but is so difficult, is the most brilliant piece of comedy acting contemporaneous New Yorkers, Londoners, Parisians, have witnessed, and the wonder of it is it grows in the memory, and, after it is over, the variations which this accomplished artiste has executed linger, without ever departing from reality, in the memory like the silvery embellishments of a great singer. When the curtain fell on the second act three enthusiastic recalls, in which cheers were mingled with plaudits, testified to the delight of the audience; for New York "first-nighters" are experts, and know an artist when they see one.

While Mrs. Kendal was eclipsing all predecessors, Mr. Kendal was wrestling with a memory dear to New Yorkers, that of Lester Wallack, as a cynical and Ouidaesque Prosper Couramont. Lester Wallack was unquestionably an admirable actor of the romantic school, but why "always partridge"? Why not farewell partridge, welcome grouse? Mr. Kendal's Colonel Blake is not Lester Wallack's Prosper Couramont but—profound distinction—it is Mr. Kendal's Colonel Blake, and "We like you!" is the verdict of the chilliest of "first-

nighters" of the season. There is an ease, a naturalness, a personal magnetism in Mr. Kendal's work that render him a welcome figure. There is nothing grand, gloomy, or peculiar about his hero of "A Scrap of Paper"; he does not suggest a blighted being, but he makes him a sympathetic, prepossessing, susceptible man of the world, and never forces the note that separates the natural from the artificial.

The treatment of the play, from its adaptation to English life to the details with which it is embellished, is eminently representative of the modern school of London acting so closely allied to the French in some respects, so different from it in others. The third act "went" with great spirit, and when the final curtain fell, to be raised repeatedly, an unusual compliment in New York, the verdict of the house, so cold at first,

#### TRANSFORMED THE ATMOSPHERE

into *couleur de rose*. There is an American custom always honoured in the observance on an occasion like this—it is that of demanding a speech. Mrs. Kendal could doubtless have made a graceful one, but her lord spoke for

her, and with much sincerity—and brevity—clasping his wife's right hand so gracefully within his own that they made the prettiest of pictures as they stood thus, the lady in the “smartest” of dinner-gowns—black moiré embellished with lace and crisp ribbons, and setting off by contrast the neck and arms and the numerous corsage ornaments among which blazed (no doubt the English “send-off” gift) a huge diamond sun. It was the general verdict that she never looked in more radiant health, so graceful or so equipped to conquer, not only as an artist but as a woman; and it is very much to be doubted if Madge Robertson in her teens ever acted with the wealth of resource displayed by Mrs. Kendal, who comes to us in the holiday time of her powers.

Such is the veracious chronicle of the Kendals' famous first night in America.

In a few days the satisfactory head-lines were out again, and to this effect—

#### AN ENTIRELY NEW HEROINE.

MRS. KENDAL'S RENDERING OF THE CHARACTER OF CLAIRE.  
HER ASSUMPTION OF THE LEADING RÔLE IN “THE  
IRONMASTER,” COMPARED WITH THAT OF JANE HADING  
AND OTHERS. A PAST MISTRESS OF TEARS.



Without going into the details of this success it must be noted that New York (where both Madame Jane Hading—the original Claire de Beaupré—and Madame Sarah Bernhardt had been seen in “*Le Maître de Forges*”) considered that Pinero had improved on Ohnet, and the Kendals had eclipsed their predecessors, whether French or English. “*Le Maître de Forges*,” said a critic, “was a skeleton made by machinery; Pinero put flesh on the skeleton’s bones and covered up the wires that held it together. This done, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal crowned it with laurel and roses. Mr. Kendal is a better actor than poor Damala; and charming as is the performance of Jane Hading, beautiful as is that Madonna face, well as she poses, Mrs. Kendal is an exponent of dramatic art unquestionably her superior.” As for Madame Sarah Bernhardt’s delineation of Claire he declared that her “individuality ‘swore at’ the personage,” and he summed up with the words, “‘*The Ironmaster*’ is, in short, from the acting of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and the adaptation by Pinero, down to the excellent performance of the minor parts, and the atmosphere of polite society, preserved in every detail of the representation, characteristic of a first-class London production.”

It is not necessary to follow the Kendals through their first American tour, which, socially as well as professionally, was aptly summed up at the time as a prolonged triumphal march. They became the hero and heroine of the day, and of course the lady was the recipient of many verses from unknown but warm-hearted and enthusiastic rhymesters. Let me quote the following—

TO THALIA.

A THANKSGIVING FOR MRS. KENDAL'S ADVENT.

O gentle Goddess, turn thy ear  
To hear our grateful song ;  
Leave cool Parnassus, and draw near  
Where mortals press and throng ;

With all thy gentle art inspired  
To modern Athens' bower,  
Thou'st sent just what we most desired—  
The choicest, sweetest flower.

To beauty thou hast added sense ;  
To sense a grace so rare  
That naught can be thy recompense  
For one so good so fair.

This "Scrap of Paper" doth attest,  
My "Impulse" is to try  
To see "The Weaker Sex" at best  
In Mrs. Kendal's eye.

## AMERICA

The good "Queen's Shilling" to attend  
I'd stoop to one "White Lie";  
An "Ironmaster's" will would bend  
When Mrs. Kendal's nigh.

But ah! Thalia, hear me now,  
As these poor lines I pen,  
At Mrs. Kendal's shrine I bow,  
A Goddess among men.

Accompanied by this quaint effusion came a droll note in which the bard said, "No disparagement to Mr. Kendal that he is left out; I leave his praises, and they are loud, to the other sex." And to this, much to Mrs. Kendal's amusement, he added, "Perhaps it is due to propriety to add that I am a married man, the father of a family of small children, and perfectly harmless."

It was on her return to New York, after this her first tour, that Mrs. Kendal said to a friend—

"A thing that has deeply impressed me has been the distinct characteristics prevailing in each city. Boston is not in any way like to New York, nor Philadelphia to Chicago. I could no more confound any one of them with another than I could mistake a Philadelphian for a New Yorker. They are themselves, and

themselves alone. No city has any idea of the powers and capabilities of its neighbours; because of the distance between them it seems impossible that they should have. What does New York know of Philadelphia's magnificent charities and institutions, or what knows Boston of Baltimore's places of help? Your cities are so scattered, and your distances so great—so enormously great—that such knowledge is impossible. Each has its marks of individuality, just as all are possessed with the common virtue or grace—I know not which to term it—of hospitality. We had read of American hospitality, we had heard of it, but now we have seen, enjoyed, and experienced it, and I can easily say there is nothing like it the world over.

“Such cordiality and kindness I have never before encountered. And I have been able only in a slight degree to accept of this hospitality for various reasons. My work, unfortunately, requires so much of my time; rehearsals are constantly necessary, for we are always flying from one city to another, and in each place we have to begin work afresh. And then the very limited length of our stay in the different cities has helped to prevent me knowing more inti-

mately the charming people I have had the good fortune to meet. But to know that this journey, which has meant to me nine months' separation from my children, my home, and all my oldest friends, constant travelling, the facing of new audiences nightly, and of new cities almost weekly, that this journey has brought me many new warm friends, and has given, perhaps, much pleasure to those friends, is most satisfactory."

And so, "bringing their sheaves with them," the Kendals returned to London, and on the afternoon of June 26, 1890, were entertained at a "Home Welcome," which the members of the "send off" dinner committee had organised at the Hotel Metropole. It was a very informal, but a very pleasant affair. In gracefully chosen words Miss Geneviève Ward bade them, on behalf of all present, "Welcome," and Mr. Kendal in responding laid special stress on the right royal way in which they had been socially received and entertained in America, and of the many delightful people they had met there, and could now claim as friends.

At home the Kendals talked enthusiastically of their trans-Atlantic reception, and their pretty drawing-room in Harley Street was full of the beautiful *souvenirs* that had been given them,

from handsome pieces of silver to a little model of a Philadelphian Quakeress in the primitive dress of her faith (a quaint costume rarely seen in England now), the gift of some simple "friend" who wished to do honour to the English visitors.

"How did I like America?" said Mrs. Kendal in my hearing, and replying to an often repeated question. "Well, I hardly know how to describe it, and yet seem to be quite just to England. I should not like it to be thought that we did not appreciate the cordiality of English audiences, but, you know, they've coined a verb 'to enthuse,' and they act up to it. We expected, from what we had heard, to find the Americans wanted their acting broad, but we found their perceptions quick as thought. Jefferson told us when he was over here that you could take an American audience with a turn of the eye, and you can. They can appreciate *finesse* in acting as well as any playgoers."

"Yes," echoed Mr. Kendal, "we went across, not knowing how we should be received, advertised ourselves just as we do here, and we found ourselves welcomed everywhere. We found the American people more

hospitable and friendly than ever we could have expected."

Indeed they could find no words in which to convey a full account of the pleasure their visit had given them, and the gratitude with which it had inspired them.

Delighted as their English friends were with the "running-over" measure of their success, they were somewhat regretful to know that they were almost immediately to start on a second tour. But American hay was waiting to be made—in America the sun was shining—and they very wisely set out to gather in their harvest.

The welcome they received was as warm as ever, and amongst other productions Pinero's "The Squire" met with abundant favour. And so the scent of the Old World hay was wafted over the ocean and across the footlights of the New World! On the first night of "The Squire" they were applauded, recalled, and applauded again, and every possible means was taken by an enthusiastic audience to make them understand that they were favourites. In speaking of this satisfactory evening a critic said, "An American audience never tires of seeing Mr. and Mrs. Kendal make

love. They appear to be giving lessons not in the art but in the experience." After this tour it was hoped that they would once more settle down in England, but they were still wanted on "the other side," and very soon the following announcement appeared:—

### MR. AND MRS. KENDAL.

*Under the direction of Mr. Daniel Frohman.*

#### THIRD AND LAST AMERICAN TOUR,

1891-92.

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#### ROUTE.

|                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Oct. 12, New York . . . .         | 3 weeks, Star Theatre.          |
| Nov. 2, Washington, D.C. . .      | 1 week, National Theatre.       |
| Nov. 9, Philadelphia Pa. . .      | 2 weeks, Broad Street Theatre.  |
| Nov. 23, Boston, Mass. . . .      | 2 weeks, Hollis Street Theatre. |
| Dec. 7, Buffalo, N.Y. . . . .     | 3 nights, Academy of Music.     |
| Dec. 10, Cleveland, O. . . . .    | 3 nights, Euclid Opera House.   |
| Dec. 14, Chicago, Ill. . . . .    | 2 weeks, Hooley's Theatre.      |
| Dec. 28, Milwaukee, Wis. . . .    | 1 week, Davidson Theatre.       |
| Jan. 4, St. Louis, Mo. . . . .    | 1 week, Olympic Theatre.        |
| Jan. 11, Pittsburg, Pa. . . . .   | 1 week, Duquesne Theatre.       |
| Jan. 18, Brooklyn, N.Y. . . .     | 1 week, Park Theatre.           |
| Jan. 25, Orange, N.J. . . . .     | 1 night, Music Hall.            |
| Jan. 26, Trenton, N.J. . . . .    | 1 night, Taylor Opera House.    |
| Jan. 27, Wilmington, Del. . . .   | 1 night Grand Opera House.      |
| Jan. 28, Richmond, Va. . . . .    | 3 nights, Academy of Music.     |
| Feb. 1, Baltimore, Md. . . . .    | 1 week, Lyceum Theatre.         |
| Feb. 8, Cincinnati, O. . . . .    | 1 week, Grand Opera House.      |
| Feb. 15, Louisville, Ky. . . . .  | 3 nights, Macauley's Theatre.   |
| Feb. 18, Evansville, Ind. . . . . | 1 night, Opera House.           |
| Feb. 19, Terre Haute, Ind. . . .  | 1 night, Opera House.           |
| Feb. 20, Lafayette, Ind. . . . .  | 1 night, Opera House.           |
| Feb. 22, Indianapolis, Ind. . . . | 3 nights, Grand Opera House.    |
| Feb. 25, Dayton, O. . . . .       | 1 night, Grand Opera House.     |



|                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Feb. 26, Columbus, O. . . .      | 1 night, Opera House.           |
| Feb. 27, Toledo, O. . . .        | 1 night, Wheeler Opera House.   |
| Feb. 29, Detroit, Mich. . . .    | 3 nights, Lyceum Theatre.       |
| Mar. 3, Toronto, Ont. . . .      | 3 nights, Grand Opera House.    |
| Mar. 7, New York . . . .         | 2 weeks, Palmer's Theatre.      |
| Mar. 21, Washington, D.C. . .    | 1 week, National Theatre.       |
| Mar. 28, Boston, Mass. . . .     | 1 week, Hollis Street Theatre.  |
| April 4, Philadelphia, Pa. . .   | 1 week, Broad Street Theatre.   |
| April 11, Bridgeport, Conn. . .  | 1 night, Bridgeport Theatre.    |
| April 12, Waterbury, Conn. . .   | 1 night, Jacques Opera House.   |
| April 13, Hartford, Conn. . . .  | 1 night, Proctor's Opera House. |
| April 14, Springfield, Conn. . . | 1 night, Gilmore's Opera House. |
| April 15, Worcester, Conn. . .   | 1 night, Worcester Theatre.     |
| April 16, New Haven, Conn. . .   | 1 night, Hyperion Theatre.      |
| April 18, Brooklyn, N.Y. . . .   | 1 week.                         |
| April 25, New York . . . .       | 1 week.                         |
| May 2, Williamsburgh, N.Y. .     | 1 week, Amphion Theatre.        |

A glance at their *route* will show how far their tours now extended, and how much work, both in travelling and acting, they gave themselves to do.

It was during one of these tours that poor Mrs. Kendal underwent an awful experience. They were playing in Philadelphia; the house was crowded; she was ready dressed for her part, and the curtain was about to go up, when she asked her maid to give her a glass of a tonic she was taking. Hastily she put it to her lips, and then, to her horror, realised that the wrong phial had been used, and that she had swallowed poison! Quickly, and with characteristic presence of mind, she took the remedies that occurred to her, sent for a doctor, and in

the hope that she had not taken enough to prove fatal, determined to go on with her part. And so, in intense agony, and with a mouth that seemed full of flame, she went on the stage. At every available interval the physician did his best to avert mischief and alleviate her suffering, but no one in that cheering and delighted audience knew what the poor, brave creature who was amusing them was undergoing. For three weeks Mrs. Kendal spent her days in bed and her evenings on the stage, and her doctors declared that if she had swallowed a few more drops of the liquid her life would not have been worth an hour's purchase.

It will be seen that this third tour of 1891-92 was announced as their "last," but in 1893 an irresistible temptation came in their way. Mr. Pinero's brilliant but daring play, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," had been produced at the St. James's; it was drawing all London, and was the talk of the day. Why should not the Kendals, who were so closely identified with the Pinero plays, be the first to produce it in America? The author was anxious that it should be so; Mr. Daniel Frohman was quite willing to book a tour—it only wanted their consent. No doubt, much as they wanted to

be in their own home again, the temptation was a very strong, nay, an irresistible one.

The stage history of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is fairly well known. It had been intended for the Garrick Theatre, but, while admiring the intense cleverness of the work, Mr. Hare had declined the responsibility of producing a play dealing with such a formidable theme. It was then passed on to the St. James's, where Mr. Alexander, after expressing his own doubts, promised to "try it" at a few special *matinées*. Chance, however, favoured the play; it was boldly brought out in the evening bill, and created a *furore* that was absolutely startling.

Whether this phenomenal success would have been made without the peculiarly fascinating performance of Mrs. Patrick Campbell is a moot point. She not only idealised the character of the depraved Paula, she absolutely etherealised it. Whether the impersonation was true to nature or not was hardly asked. It was a thing by itself—a new sensation—it had to be seen.

I think that (as seen at the St. James's) Mr. Punch perfectly summed her up when he doubtfully though admiringly said, "What was she? What was her bringing up? What ought by right to have been her position in life? Was

she a waif and stray from the commencement? One allusion to her early youth gives her pause—so natural a pause, too! the perfection of art!—for a moment and then, with a shrug of the shoulders, she dismisses the recollection. She has learnt the piano, that is evident; she has a refined taste, oddly enough, in music; she is loving, she is vulgar; she can purr, she can spit; she is gentle, she is violent; she has good impulses, and she is a fiend incarnate; she is affectionate, she is malicious; generous and trusting, selfish and suspicious; she is all heart and no soul; she is a Peri at the Gates of Paradise; she is a *bête fauve* that should be under lock and key."

Yes, it was that "What was she?" *What was* this complex Paula Tanqueray as portrayed by Mrs. Campbell? It was the endeavour to solve this problem that sent thousands to the St. James's during the first run of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." In truth it was a problem play in more senses than one.

The glamour that Mrs. Campbell cast upon it half blinded many to the really grim story that was unfolded, and subsequently many playwrights who tried to follow Mr. Pinero's bold lead had to acknowledge the truth of the



*Photoby*

MR. AND MRS. RENTAL IN "DIPLOMACY."

*[Wardrobe & Groceries]*



assertion that he had succeeded "not *because* of his subject, but *in spite* of it."

For a time, however, the hapless lady "with a past" became the heroine of fiction both on the stage and in the novel. It was not a satisfactory state of things, for, poor thing, her story must, under any circumstances, be a very sad one. Her existence is not to be ignored, but I cannot think that many people want to see her in a play. Women always want to avoid her, and men regard her from different points of view. In the eyes of those who, without saying much about it, have Christianity embedded in their hearts, she must ever be an object of intense pity; to those who shout their religion from the housetops she is, so they declare, an offence; some do not in the least degree understand her; and to many she must convey a sense of unspeakable shame.

Does the reader remember those lines that, as Stephanie de Mohrivart, in Messrs. Herman Merivale and F. C. Grove's fine play "Forget-me-Not," Miss Geneviève Ward used to hurl at Sir Horace Welby—"Why may a man live two lives, while a woman must stand or fall by one? What was the difference between us two, Sir Horace Welby, in those bygone years that should

make me now a leper and you a saint? that should give you the right to say to me, 'You are Vice and I am Virtue'? There would be no place in creation for such women as I if it were not for such men as you!" How true this is, and how shameful it is!

When Mr. Pinero wrote "*The Profligate*," and in his usual vivid, yet deftly-blended colours, showed the "man with a past," he gave his play a tragic ending, and against it his audiences clamoured. "No! No!" they said, "we know that Dunstan Renshaw has been a seducer and a hypocrite, but he must be forgiven and at curtain-fall live happy ever after"; and, bowing to the popular opinion, he altered the finale of his play. Did any one ask that the poor erring, and sometime cruelly treated Paula Tanqueray should have a "happy ending"? No! no! The moral British thumb was as inflexibly turned down as if it had been employed in a Roman amphitheatre when a gladiator was butchered to make a holiday. According to the British judgment it was quite right that Renshaw should be taken back to the heart of the pure young wife he had deceived; and that Paula should realise the advisability of putting an end to her existence with a dose of poison.



Doubtless in the days when wrong is made right, this hideously unfair state of things will receive attention.

Well, Mrs. Kendal either made up her mind to, or was persuaded to play "Paula Tanqueray" in America, and it was determined that the piece should be performed during the brief provincial tour that was to precede the embarkation of the company at Liverpool.

Accordingly, on August 31, 1893, a few of the faithful journeyed to Leicester to see the new Mrs. Tanqueray. Some of the leading critics were there—and Mr. Pinero was there watching the performance with intense interest, from the rise to the fall of the curtain. It was a difficult audience to play to, for the good people of Leicester had apparently heard little of the play that had thrilled London, and evidently were in the humour to enjoy a comedy of the "Scrap of Paper" school. Accordingly they hailed Mr. Pinero's witty lines with a boisterous mirth that must have been most disconcerting to the actors, and was not a little irritating to those who were anxious to lose no point of the play in the hands of its new interpreters. By and by, however, the Kendals, backed by the power of the story, held the

house, and meaningless giggles were succeeded by that attentive silence that grand old Betterton used to declare was the truest form of applause.

From the very first Mrs. Kendal let us see that her interpretation of Paula was to be her own. She had no intention of drawing an idyllic portrait of the woman who, for purely selfish reasons, wanted to marry the infatuated Aubrey Tanqueray. She could, and she did, show us the good points in the poor creature's character, but in displaying its seamy side she spared neither herself nor her audience. It was an unswerving study from the life ; it made the boldest and the best points in Mr. Pinero's work stand out in strong relief (as I watched his attentive face I fancied that he for the first time realised how great a thing he had written) ; to the thoughtful it was a wondrous piece of work ; but it did not round off the corners of what is, after all, a tragedy.

As the play continued its course the interest of the portrait deepened and increased, and the mocking bravado of the earlier scenes gave way to an ineffable tenderness that at last held the hearts of those who had been forced by the actress to dislike this wayward daughter of Eve.

Mr. William Archer, who had travelled from London to be present on the occasion, said afterwards: "What of Mrs. Kendal's reading of the part of Paula? It is the work of an accomplished comedian, who has at her command all the resources of her art. Comparisons are odious; and I do not propose to compare Mrs. Kendal with Mrs. Patrick Campbell except on one point. She certainly puts a greater depth of feeling into the later acts, and on the whole (I should say) she does rightly."

As Aubrey Tanqueray, Mr. Kendal was admirable, and at a happy little supper party at the old Bell Hotel that succeeded the performance the pair were cordially congratulated on having secured a trump card for play in America.

"The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" *did* turn out a trump card, but not quite in the way that was expected, or was perfectly satisfactory. The play drew crowded houses—the excellence of its rendering was freely acknowledged—but, whereas it had drawn all London, and had hardly called a blush to the cheek of Mr. Podsnap's "young person," it scandalised America, and her critics were not slow to say so. It is curious to note that five years ago our go-ahead cousins across the Atlantic were not quite so "advanced" as

we "old folk at home." Nowadays, I fancy, we have both "advanced" a little more, and our susceptibilities are more evenly balanced.

In order to describe what happened I will quote one of the most temperate of their critics.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kendal," he says, "were welcomed back to America by a great audience at the Star Theatre. Leading professionals and the best society people packed the stalls and adorned the boxes; the dress circle was a bevy of American beauties; and the upper part of the house was as crowded as the orchestra. Mrs. Kendal was repeatedly applauded and called before the curtain for her wonderful acting, which ranged from high comedy to domestic tragedy, and Mr. Kendal for the artistic skill with which he managed to retain the dignity of an English gentleman in the most risky situations. At the close of the play, although the hour was near midnight, the whole audience remained to give Mrs. Kendal a special greeting and to listen to Mr. Kendal's graceful and grateful speech, with its pretty compliment to Manager Frohman. Everything that he said found a prompt and generous response until he began to speak of 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' as a great original drama which had caused a sensa-

tion in London and which conveyed a moral lesson. Then the silence of the audience was ominous. They had applauded the acting; but they refused to applaud the play. They were delighted to see Mr. and Mrs. Kendal again; but they were surprised and shocked at being presented to such a person as 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.'

"If this much-advertised play were as original, as artistic, as great as the advance notices have painted it, we should still hold that it is not fit to be represented in an American theatre. Art is wide, but it has its limitations. There are marvellous literary works which have to be kept under lock and key. There are pictures so exquisite that experts are astounded at the skill which created them, and yet they are carefully concealed in private cabinets. There are sculptures so finely chiselled that no mortal hand seems equal to the achievement, and yet they are shown only to a few connoisseurs. The subject of a work of art is even more important than the execution of it when it is intended for public exhibition, and some subjects are not to be discussed before ladies. How a courtesan would look and act if married to a respectable gentleman is not a subject to be represented upon the

stage. If any philosopher be really curious about it, he can find full information in police reports.

“But Mr. Pinero’s work has not even the merit of the books, the pictures, the sculptures, to which we have referred. It is not true that ‘the future is the past over again,’ as he says in one of his imitation epigrams. It is not true that a bad woman cannot be as thoroughly reformed as a bad man. It is not true that all men have ‘a past’ in the sense of a criminal past. It is not true that when a young girl falls in love with a young man she is likely to discover that he has ‘kept house’ with her mother or her stepmother. It is not true that Second Mr. Tanquerays or Second Mrs. Tanquerays are trying to force their way into society. The whole play is stagey in material and construction and as artificial as the footlights, which it is unworthy to face.”

Such was America’s opinion on London’s new sensation, and it will be noted that, in his vehemence, the writer entirely overlooks and incontinently condemns the undeniable cleverness—one may say greatness—of Mr. Pinero’s work.

The reason for his indignation is not far to seek. “Mrs. Kendal,” he goes on to say, “has

won and holds her position as the most popular actress on the English-speaking stage because she has always been not only a good actress, but a good woman. We remember her when she was Madge Robertson—a girl like the Ellean of this play. She is loved and respected by everybody, from the Queen to the shop-girl, because she has been as good off the stage as on the stage, an honour as well as an ornament to her profession. Why should she pain her admirers, and risk her popularity, after all these good years, by devoting her talents to the exemplification of how an abandoned woman would behave under certain distasteful circumstances? ”

There lay the trouble in a nutshell. Mrs. Kendal's faithful American adherents did not like to associate her with poor Paula, and no doubt it was chiefly for the sake of the actress they had learned to love that the critics condemned the play. They were all very much of one mind concerning it, though some of them were more outspoken than others. One of them, for example, said: “ Amid a careful and detailed environment of modern stage settings, and with a perfection of modern stage art, the Kendals last evening at the Star Theatre, in the presence of a deeply interested audience, which filled the

house to its capacity, presented to a New York public Mr. A. W. Pinero's 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.' It is a question as to the point from which to judge the play and its presentation. From the moral standpoint, from the views sacred to the fathers and mothers of the Republic, the play, its motive, its movement, its delineation, and its lesson should be irresistibly and irretrievably—to use a stage expression—damned."

Another said: "There is little doubt the play will be as great a success here as it was in London. But we would prefer to see some other actress in it than Mrs. Kendal. She cannot spoil her splendid reputation by playing the part of the shameless woman; she cannot even rub off a bit of the lustre, for all the world agrees that she is a charming and talented actress. But we prefer her in something else. It is not well to harvest Dead Sea fruit."

Yet, in spite of all that was said, the play, artistically as well as financially, was a great success, and though there were thousands who went to see it out of sheer curiosity, there were many who realised how marvellously Mrs. Kendal played the part of Paula, purposely making her *outré*, but never really vulgar, in the



first act, and then showing how, under the influence of her husband and his daughter, she gradually refines until in the last act she actually becomes the noblest character on the stage. To those who took the trouble to study it, and who were capable of understanding it, it was a truly great performance.

But the strictures on the play were very vexatious. Like the wise man that he is, Mr. Kendal takes all things philosophically; but Mrs. Kendal was very sore about them, for although she was in no way responsible for the piece or its selection (the choosing of plays is in the hands of Mr. Kendal) the criticisms seemed in a way to reflect upon her own good taste. Besides, it was so surprising that a play which (despite its theme) had excited the admiration of England should be thought inexcusably offensive in America.

Not unnaturally, Mrs. Kendal resented it, and it was while she was in this mood that she permitted herself to see "an interviewer." Now I have always maintained that Mrs. Kendal should never be "interviewed." She is a very impulsive talker. Her thoughts flash through her mind like lightning, and, always bright and far-seeing though they are, she often puts them into words

without having considered what their meaning may convey to those who are unaccustomed to her manner. Among her friends, who understand her, her conversation is not only delightful, but fascinating; but to the stranger journalist, eager for good "copy," and setting down every frankly spoken word, her style has been far too often misunderstood. Among many more, she is taken advantage of by the experienced and stony-hearted interviewer. No one can blame him for making the most of his material, but, though I am a journalist myself and know how welcome good "copy" is, I always feel it rather unfair that fancies rather than facts should be thus gathered—especially when the "subject" is an outspoken and unsuspecting lady.

If on this occasion Mrs. Kendal did not talk too wisely, she certainly spoke very cleverly, and the interviewer did not resist his irresistible temptation. An article appeared which, though good-natured in intention, was written in such bantering style that it attracted universal attention, and was so recopied and remodelled in other newspapers that at last its author could hardly recognise it. Never did rolling snowball more quickly increase its bulk.

The great American grievance against "The

Second Mrs. Tanqueray" was its alleged immorality, and in this interview Mrs. Kendal whimsically, but of course wilfully, chose to imagine that, as compared with poor old *blasé* England, America was so young and innocent that it did not know that such women as Paula had an existence. Taking this as her standpoint, she went on to defend the play, declaring, rightly enough, that to those who were compelled to admit that the laws which human beings have made for themselves, and which govern society, are occasionally broken, Mr. Pinero's work conveyed a great moral lesson, showing that retributive justice at last overtakes and punishes sin, and that repentance, however sincere, will not help us to ward off that punishment. Again, she maintained that a lesson was conveyed in the example of the woe and wretchedness men bring upon so many innocent people when they sin against women. "If," she said, "your people cannot understand the moral lesson in all this I am afraid they cannot understand the Bible. I know it is a little book not much read, perhaps out of fashion, but it exists, and it teaches plain truths in plain words."

Those who know and appreciate Mrs. Kendal will easily imagine how (having conceived this

half-humorous, half-satirical line of mock defence) admirably and vivaciously she would play her part, but to the interviewer she was a stranger—her words as well as her meaning were distorted—and by thousands she was once more cruelly misunderstood.

The lesson of this is that it is a great mistake for those who come before the public—as writers, actors, or what not—to reply to critics. If a lashing is administered it is best to bear it patiently and silently. To call public attention to it is only to advertise one's humiliation. I have heard many people declare that the sting of adverse criticism does not hurt them. I must not say that I do not believe them, but I am justified in thinking that they must be very strangely constituted. But if the Kendals' fourth American tour was not without its wholly unforeseen annoyances they were soon busy for a fifth with a repertory that included "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" (still wanted by the public in spite of the criticisms), "Lady Clancarty," "Still Waters Run Deep," "A Scrap of Paper," "All For Her," and "The Ironmaster."

Again let me call attention to the gigantic tour that was booked for them :—

## MR. AND MRS. KENDAL.

*Under the Direction of Mr. Daniel Frohman.*

## FIFTH AMERICAN TOUR.

1894-95.

## ROUTE.

|                  |                    |           |                            |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Mon., Sept. 17,  | Chicago, Ill. . .  | 3 weeks,  | Hooley's Theatre.          |
| Mon., Oct. 8,    | St. Louis, Mo. .   | 1 week,   | Olympic Theatre.           |
| Mon., Oct. 15,   | Denver, Col. . .   | 5 nights, | Tabor Grand.               |
| Sat., Oct. 20,   | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Sun., Oct. 21,   | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Mon., Oct. 22,   | San Francisco.     |           |                            |
|                  | Cal. . . . .       | 3 weeks,  | Baldwin Theatre.           |
| Sun., Nov. 11,   | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Mon., Nov. 12,   | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Tues., Nov. 13,  | Portland, Ore. .   | 3 nights, | Marquam Grand.             |
| Fri., Nov. 16,   | Seattle, Wash. .   | 2 nights, | Seattle Theatre.           |
| Tues., Nov. 19,  | Tacoma, Wash. .    | 1 night,  | Tacoma Theatre.            |
| Tues., Nov. 20,  | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Wed., Nov. 21,   | Travel.            |           |                            |
| Thurs., Nov. 22, | Salt Lake, Utah    | 3 nights, | Salt Lake Theatre.         |
| Mon., Nov. 26,   | Omaha, Neb. . .    | 2 nights, | Boyd's New Theatre.        |
| Wed., Nov. 28,   | St. Joseph, Mo. .  | 1 night,  | The Tootle Theatre.        |
| Thurs., Nov. 29, | Des Moines, Ia. .  | 1 night,  | Foster's Opera House.      |
| Fri., Nov. 30,   | Davenport, Ia. .   | 1 night,  | Burtis' Opera House.       |
| Sat., Dec. 1,    | Peoria, Ill. . . . | 1 night,  | Grand Opera House.         |
| Mon., Dec. 3,    | Detroit, Mich. .   | 3 nights, | Detroit Opera House.       |
| Thurs. Dec. 6,   | Cleveland, O. . .  | 3 nights, | Euclid Avenue Opera House. |
| Mon., Dec. 10,   | Pittsburg, Pa. .   | 1 week,   | Alvin Theatre.             |
| Mon., Dec. 17,   | Toronto, Can. . .  | 3 nights, | Grand Opera House.         |
| Thurs., Dec. 20, | Rochester, N.Y.    | 1 night,  | Lyceum Theatre.            |
| Fri., Dec. 21,   | Syracuse, N.Y. .   | 1 night,  | Weiting Opera House.       |
| Sat., Dec. 22,   | Utica, N.Y. . . .  | 1 night,  | Utica Opera House.         |
| Mon., Dec. 24,   | New York, N.Y.     | 5 weeks,  | Abbey's Theatre.           |
| Mon., Jan. 28,   | Boston, Mass. . .  | 2 weeks,  | Tremont Theatre.           |
| Mon., Feb. 11,   | New Bedford,       |           |                            |
|                  | Mass. . . . .      | 1 night,  | Grand Opera House          |

|                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tues., Feb. 12, Newport, R. I. .  | 1 night, Newport Opera House.        |
| Wed., Feb. 13, Fall River, Mass.  | 1 night, Academy of Music.           |
| Thurs., Feb. 14, Worcester, Mass. | 1 night, Worcester Theatre.          |
| Fri., Feb. 15, Hartford, Con. .   | 1 night, Proctor's Opera House.      |
| Sat., Feb. 16, New Haven, Con.    | 1 night, Hyperion Theatre.           |
| Mon., Feb. 18, Philadelphia, Pa.  | 1 week, Chestnut Street Opera House. |
| Mon., Feb. 25, Baltimore, Md. .   | 1 week, Lyceum Theatre.              |
| Mon., Mar. 4, Washington, D.C.    | 1 week, New National Theatre.        |
| Mon., Mar. 11, Brooklyn, N. Y.    | 1 week, Columbia Theatre.            |
| Mon., Mar. 18, Harlem, N. Y. .    | 1 week, Harlem Opera House.          |
| Mon., Mar. 25, Providence, R. I.  | 3 nights, Providence Opera House.    |
| Thurs., Mar. 28, Lawrence, Mass.  | 1 night, Lawrence Opera House.       |
| Fri., Mar. 29, Lowell, Mass. .    | 1 night, Opera House.                |
| Sat., Mar. 30, Portland, Me. .    | 1 night, City Hall.                  |
| Mon., April 1, Boston, Mass. .    | 1 week, Hollis Street Theatre.       |
| Mon., April 8,                    |                                      |
| Tues., April 9,                   |                                      |
| Wed., April 10,                   |                                      |
| Thurs., April 11,                 |                                      |
| Fri., April 12,                   |                                      |
| Sat., April 13,                   |                                      |
| Mon., April 15, New York, N.Y.    | 2 weeks, Abbey's Theatre.            |
| Mon., April 29, Washington, D.C.  | 1 week, National Theatre.            |
| Mon., May 6, Chicago, Ill. .      | 2 weeks, Hooley's Theatre,           |
| Mon., May 20,                     |                                      |
| Tues., May 21,                    |                                      |
| Wed., May 22,                     |                                      |
| Thurs., May 23,                   |                                      |
| Fri., May 24,                     |                                      |
| Sat., May 25,                     |                                      |

“Yes,” many people will say, “it looks a great undertaking on paper, but no doubt they travelled in such luxury that they suffered as little from exertion as they would from inconvenience.”

But they had their discomforts. For example,

in some remote town, though the theatre they were to play in was a fine one, the accommodation in the dressing-rooms was appalling. There was an utter absence of ventilation, and the furniture and lighting were disgraceful to the last degree. Mrs. Kendal's wash-hand stand was a tin bowl placed upon a shabby chair! On objecting to this, and failing to obtain any improvement, she rose to the occasion and sent for the manager. Wearing his hat, and redolent of tobacco, that gentleman lounged into the room, and asked "What's the trouble?" Mrs. Kendal pointed to the tin bowl and spoke some plain truths as to the abominably dirty state of the room, winding up by declaring that she must at least have an earthenware basin, for she never had washed in a tin bowl and she never would. The placid proprietor of the theatre turned the quid of tobacco he was chewing, and remarked, "Waal, I guess your betters hev." Mrs. Kendal promptly sent for their own manager, and asked him what was the penalty for breaking the contract by not appearing. She was told it would mean so many hundred dollars. "Draw a cheque for it at once," she said, "and either get that man to take his hat off, or have it knocked off; we shall not play here!" Then, turning to her maid,

“Pack everything up and tell the ladies and gentlemen there will be no performance.” Now as every seat in the house was booked the proprietor at once “climbed down,” and so did his best to improve matters that the storm passed over. The ultimate result of Mrs. Kendal’s spirited behaviour was that the dressing accommodation of the house was completely renovated, and on the next visit of the company they were made as comfortable as they could desire. It was an alteration for which all actors in the habit of fulfilling engagements at the theatre in question were deeply thankful.

The great feature of this tour was to be “Lady Clancarty,” and, in order to give Americans a faithful picture of England in the days of William III., it was dressed and mounted without any regard to expense, and with the most elaborate attention to detail. All the costumes were new and of the most costly materials, and their correctness was carried down to the embroidery (an item of accuracy not to be discerned by the audience) of “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*,” on the King’s garter. The furniture, too, was as solid as if it had been made for Royal Palaces instead of for the three hours’ traffic of the stage. The great screen in



the King's private apartment was as massive as its original, and the brocade covering it was as handsome as it was in reality. The cornices and chimneypieces had been modelled from original work, and the great carved bedstead was a copy of one at Hampton Court.

As for Mrs. Kendal's costumes I must quote a lady who inspected them. "The cloak which she wears in the first act of 'Lady Clancarty,'" she says, "is of the most exquisite hand-embroidered silk in delicate shades; the laces are all of the utmost elegance; the brocades would stand alone. As for the filmy caps which Mrs. Kendal wears, they are sewn on her head every night for fear of wrinkles in the fit. No one has ever seen Mrs. Kendal 'come apart' on the stage. You never find her clutching at a gaping placquet, or fumbling at a loosened collar; her hats never slide or tilt or wobble. Everything is put on to stay firmly, until its turn comes to be taken off. She has a serene consciousness always in the reliability of her back breadths, and the infallibility of her buttons and strings. She has cushions and cushions full of coloured pins. Green velvet bows are fastened with—I was going to say green velvet pins—but pins of the exact shade of the bows.

And everything appears to have been made for its purpose. That exquisite resplendent brocade in the last act was made for that train, and anything more beautiful to examine you have never seen. The roses look as if they grew on the silk ; the leaves belong to the roses."

Certainly America never saw a more perfectly staged historical play than the Kendals' importation of "Lady Clancarty."

Talking to me the other day a member of their company told me of a pretty and considerate custom of which I never heard my friends make mention. On the American Christmas Day the theatres are opened in the usual way, but, knowing how dear that anniversary is to the English heart, the Kendals always invited the whole of their company to "after-curtain" supper at their hotel. Then it was that their fellow-actors found out why Mrs. Kendal had been so anxious to discover their favourite dishes. There all these dainties were, flanked by a noble spread, and, with the most genial host, and the most charming of hostesses, the old-world, time-honoured Christmas festivities were kept up until American clocks were chiming the fours and the fives of the morning.

I must not forget that in America Mrs.

Kendal, with consummate success, re-read that much discussed Social Science paper on "The Drama," and this time without causing any disturbance in theatrical dovecots.

In dealing with these tours I have intentionally said nothing concerning the intimate friends made by the Kendals, or the social functions that were held in their honour. Very rightly they do not make a parade of personal matters, and the numerous letters from celebrities expressing congratulation, admiration, and esteem which they received and cherish they hold sacred.



## CHAPTER X

### *“THE KENDALS AT HOME”*

TO all who know them intimately it must be a pleasure to think of the Kendals in their own household. To me it is delightful to conjure up happy memories of 9, Taviton Street, Gordon Square, where they lived soon after they were married; of 145, Harley Street; and of their present handsome house, 12, Portland Place. As suited to their ever-increasing and well-won prosperity and their growing family, the houses have become larger, their surroundings more valuable and complete, but in all their homes the same perfect taste, the same honest English comfort, and the same true hospitality has existed.

What is true hospitality? Well, I often think that the Kendals have given me the keynote to it. I know that when I stay with them I am made perfectly at home. If I have

work to do, and am delayed by it, I never feel that I need worry about their carefully kept hours and regulations. They will go on as usual, and when I come in, whatever the hour may be, I am greeted with the same cheery smiles, the same bright welcome, the same assurance that I am to consider the house as my own, and to do and ask for what I like. Surely that is true hospitality? They have all been beautiful as well as very interesting homes—beautiful because of the nice discernment with which everything from basement floor to top-most ceiling has been chosen; and interesting, inasmuch as the Kendals have always carried their “household gods” with them, and have thus stamped them with the invaluable hall-mark of “association.” Nothing to the warm-hearted can be more valuable than belongings that, beautiful themselves, bear with them “associations.”

The first thing that would strike a stranger is Mr. Kendal’s valuable collection of pictures. Himself an admirable draughtsman and artist (in his rare leisure moments he loves nothing better than to have the pencil or the paint brush in his hand), he is a remarkable judge of the work of others, and many of the paintings

that he cherishes bear testimony to his keen discrimination. Travelling from provincial town to provincial town, as he has done for many years, Mr. Kendal, by invariably visiting and closely inspecting the local art exhibitions, has been able, by his appreciation and knowledge of technique, to single out the early work of many budding geniuses, and it is most interesting to walk round his rooms and to note how, in his own quiet and practical way (for, to the young artists' delight, he bought their pictures), he foretold the success of many of the most popular painters of to-day.

An instance of his almost unerring judgment in this direction is before me as I write these lines. A good many years ago I was with him in a provincial art gallery that promised no ripe harvest, when he was suddenly arrested by a work "skied" in an obscure corner. It was a mere study of still life, and manifestly the handicraft of a beginner. I should have passed it by, but he, pointing to it, said, "There!—that's crude, but it's painted by some one who has the right stuff in him." He did not buy it, and a little later I, chiefly in remembrance of a pleasant day spent with a good friend and comrade, purchased it. I had almost forgotten

its existence, when only the other day an artist, seeing it in my house, said, "Do you know you've got a treasure there? Why, it's a noble specimen of the early work (the picture is signed, but I had never observed it) of one of the most noted Academicians of to-day."

But, although his walls bear many evidences of this cultured instinct, Mr. Kendal of course is not satisfied to own only the clever experiments of novices, and he is the appreciative possessor of many noble examples of the mature work of the most notable English and foreign artists. A thing that greatly strikes one in his unique collection is the deft manner in which they have been "hung," with a master-eye to colour and effect. No picture (as we so often see in less carefully arranged collections) is allowed to "clash" with another, and the wall-papers and decorations of his rooms are so well chosen as to bring everything into harmony. On interior decoration Mr. Kendal is indeed a recognised authority, and evidence of it has been seen in every play that he has staged. His bookcases, too, evince the same care, taste, and apt eye for colour; and, when well carried out, there can be nothing more decorative or attractive than rows of handsomely bound books.



Carefully preserved in choice morocco are original copies of all the plays—published and unpublished—in which he and his wife have appeared, and in company with these may be seen a remarkable collection of the first editions of Dickens and other great authors, as well as many invaluable works on theatrical lore. His library is a marvel of comfort and completeness, and it is none the less serviceable because it is luxurious. His letters and papers are always in order, and, ever facing him, is a formidable pile of the manuscript plays that are always being submitted to him, and which, to his infinite credit, he conscientiously reads. I may as well say here that I know no better judge of an unacted play than Mr. Kendal. Nothing is more difficult to decide than whether a tragedy, comedy, or farce that appeals to and even fascinates the reader will be successful on the stage. In this connection even those one would imagine from their great experience to be the best of judges are often, and to their heavy cost, painfully deceived, and have to acknowledge the truism that the play that *reads* well often *acts* badly. But, like a clever physician examining a patient, Mr. Kendal can quickly put his finger on a weak spot, and say, “Here lies

the mischief which, if it cannot be cured, will prove fatal." Then he has the physician's painful duty (though, by the way, the man of medicine *does* pocket his fee!) of breaking the news to his generally resentful patient.

I fancy few people know what that play-reading ordeal means. It is a curious fact that although it is one of the most difficult of crafts, all people think they can write for the stage. As a matter of consequence actors and actresses (especially those of note), and every one connected with the theatres, whether it be as lessees, managers, or even dramatic critics, are pestered with bales of manuscript, accompanied by urgent requests for immediate opinions. The late E. A. Sothern once said to me, "Every man I meet has either written a play or wants to sell wine"; and my old friend J. L. Toole has shown me a remarkable letter from an utter stranger to him which ran as follows:—

"SIR,—I am in pecuniary difficulties, and *therefore* I have written a play which I send by this post. I shall be obliged if you will produce it at once, remitting me promptly the usual percentages."

Of course the play was an absolutely hopeless one, but in this sort of way those who are pro-

minent in stage-land are pestered every hour of the day. It is bad enough when they come from strangers, who, like intrusive and importunate wine merchants, are hard to shake off; but far too often they are artfully sent through “friends,” who, to their everlasting disgrace, give cruel “introductions” for this fell purpose. Then the difficulties are quadrupled. Besides, there is always this terror to be held in view. A would-be dramatist conceives the brilliantly original idea of a three-act comedy in which a young couple are “engaged” in the first act, quarrel in the second, and are re-united in the third. Crudely treated by a palpable tyro, the piece is impossible and is politely returned. A little later the well-worn theme is so well treated (or rather *re-treated*) by a skilled playwright that, with successful results, the piece is produced. Then Mr. Tyro foams with rage, and writes to every newspaper likely to publish his diatribes. He declares that his plot has been purloined, his characters appropriated, and his brains picked; and he gets a fair number of people to believe in his alleged grievances.

I sometimes wonder that with such things staring them in the face, actors have the courage—to say nothing of the patience—to read the

work of the supersensitive and suspicious unacted author. Many, I think, give it up in despair; some try to get over the difficulty by employing a reader; but when once an unasked for manuscript has been delivered at the door, the actor or manager is open to the futile but irritating charge of plagiarism. Mr. Kendal, however, makes it his business to read everything that is sent to him, and, as I have said, his judgment is rarely at fault. It must be weary work this wading through the reams of writing that pile his library table; but he has had his reward. He has unearthed many gems. The stepping-stones laid down by him have helped many anxious authors across the difficult and constantly brawling stream that separates the unacted from the acted. His painstaking discrimination is no doubt gratefully remembered by many of the leading dramatists of to-day.

In its quiet and unostentatious way this tasteful library of his has done invaluable work. His courtesy to his unknown, play-writing, correspondents, too, is beyond praise. If, as of course he generally has, to say "No," it is done in the kindest way; if he can give a little encouragement, it is like the "cup that cheers but not inebriates." If he can distinguish real merit in

a new writer, his right hand is extended to him, and his invaluable advice is at his disposal. In this way—in intervals of sketching and reading for his own amusement—in fulfilling the numerous social engagements that he shares with his wife (the popularity of the Kendals in the best society of London is unbounded), and in attending to the manifold duties connected with his profession, his time should be fully occupied; but he finds his leisure for horse exercise, and (latterly) the irresistible cycle. In his holidays he proves himself a good sportsman, and is one of the truest of shots. For example, while shooting on the Scotch coast he once saw lying on a distant rock a fine seal. It was a long shot, but the creature was just within range. Mr. Kendal has no idea of killing for the sake of killing, but he thought he would like to have that seal's skin. Aiming at its eye he hit it and killed the animal instantaneously, and to-day he can proudly show the skin unmarked by bullet.

But, fully occupied as he is, Mrs. Kendal is even busier, for, in spite of all her arduous professional work, and multitudinous outside engagements, she insists on “housekeeping” as if she had nothing else to do. And right well she

does it ! Although hers is the least formal household in the world, its method is admirable. Punctuality is its watchword — unostentatious comfort its precept. Then comes the evening engagement at the theatre, followed by the quiet supper, at which all things are talked over. Of course it is a most happy union. Art, as Mrs. Kendal points out, is intensely absorbing, and if only one of a married pair be its devotee, then his or her preoccupation will sorely try the other's patience. But coming home after the performance as the Kendals do, they compare notes, and tell each other where they think their impersonations might be altered or improved, and each is so anxious for the other's success that immense good comes of these conferences.

This, of course, is the ideal stage life ; but though such an excellent state of things cannot fall to the lot of all actors, Mrs. Kendal stoutly denies that her profession has any special dangers for a woman. They must be of her own seeking and making, she says, for there are no dangers for a woman in the theatre unless she courts them, and if she does that she will find them in a drawing-room and a ball-room, with the same ease as in a theatre.

Mrs. Kendal is always being asked what she

thinks of the stage as a profession for young girls, and not very long ago she summed it up as follows:—

"I think acting is a most excellent field for young women," she said, "but it must be a field, not a pasture. It is not a pasture on which thousands can graze. Instead of having a hundred in the field we have ten thousand, and there isn't room for them all. Everybody nowadays wants to go upon the stage, and some may have advantages in the way of appearance and youth and education, but this particular art that I follow is not to be taught. Therefore, they may have good looks, they may have youth, they may have education, and yet have not acting. Acting is a thing that's inside, not outside at all. The modern audience is apt to think acting consists of outside attributes, but it is not so. Then, again, when you can act well and have made money, people are apt to call it luck. I am always called a lucky woman, but I don't think it's all luck. I am vain enough to think that some of it is hard work—very hard work—constant and everlasting work. You must never cease to study. As you get older, you must fill up the wrinkles with intelligence."

Mrs. Kendal is of course right, but the curious

fact exists that, whereas no man or woman without a voice would dream of saying they could sing like a Santley or an Albani; no man or woman incapable of drawing would assert they could produce pictures like a Millais or a Rosa Bonheur; no man or woman without poetry in their veins would try to follow in the footsteps of a Tennyson or an Adelaide Procter, each and all of these, if inoculated with the modern craze for amateur acting, would be intrepidly willing, at very short notice, to appear before the public in characters on which such actors as the Kendals and their famous stage comrades have spent months and months of study—weeks and weeks of stippling to perfection's point.

Mrs. Kendal loves her home, and she loves it to be homely. This fact is prettily exemplified in a little article, fancifully called "Nuts," which some years ago she contributed to the Christmas number of the New York *Dramatic Mirror*.

"Now I especially love nuts," she wrote, "because Sunday—that blessed day of rest—is the only time when I can eat them. I simply dare not on other days for fear of my voice becoming affected. So Sunday with me means rest, peace—and nuts! What can be pleasanter,



too, than sitting round a huge fire, cooking chestnuts, with all the children, and if a friend calls, however grand his or her status may be, no one is too proud to partake of chestnuts, cooked on a bright, clear fire, glowing and sending up blue sparks from the salt used, amid the laughter of young people and children, who, fresh from school, love spending a cold frosty afternoon playing at cooking nuts—oh, those nuts !”

“But,” she adds, “there is one place where I do not like nuts, one place where nuts should never be: where all my pleasure is destroyed in them, and where I wish nuts had never been born—at the theatre! That’s the place where I hate them! I simply hate them in the gallery of a theatre. Oh! dear friends of the gallery—for you are friends—as no entertainment can be complete without your co-operation and enthusiasm—don’t eat nuts in the theatre:—that is, during the play. If you only knew what agony you inflict, I’m sure you wouldn’t continue to do so. At all West-End houses these things never occur; but when the actors go into the provincial cities, believe me, the one thing they dread, the first question they ask, is—‘*Do they crack nuts?*’ If the answer is ‘Yes’—then farewell

the tranquil mind!—Othello's occupation's gone! The actor trembles for when he comes to some delicate, tender speech—you may be sure that is the moment when—*crack!* goes a nut!”

It is at the happy supper time and in the hour's chat that succeeds it, that, the day's work being done, the Kendals are at their brightest and their best. Then they will give you their frank opinions on the art of acting, and tell you anecdotes. Their ideal is, of course, the natural school. Carefully as they attend to the staging of their plays, they do not want anything in the way of furniture, dresses, or upholstery to be obtrusive. They maintain that there is no need for a hero to clutch at a curtain, as if he were a drowning man—nor for a heroine to continually pound sofa cushions with her elbows. People do not do it in real life. Why then should it be tolerated on the stage? At such moments Mrs. Kendal can become very enthusiastic about the good work of her brother and sister artists. I remember her telling me how she went to see Madame Modjeska play in “Heartsease” at the Court Theatre, and was so touched by a brilliant piece of acting that she forgot she was in a theatre and loudly cried out: “How magnificent this

woman is!" Modjeska, she declared, could see her emotion, and played to her for the remainder of the evening.

Mrs. Kendal is fond of saying that she often plays to one person. "I remember," she has told me, "seeing a man yawn in the stalls. I put all my magnetism, or whatever it may be called, into that person," she said, "and prayed that I might get him to look at me. At last I caught his eye and kept him awake, and I played to him for the remainder of the evening."

She is always very warm in the defence of her own profession, and strongly resents the few lingering aspersions that are made upon it. Once, when returning the call of a titled lady, her hostess remarked that she had never met an actress before, but that her mother, in her capacity of the representative of a foreign court, had, during a sojourn in Paris, entertained the famous Rachel. "Yes," said the daughter of the house, continuing the story, "and they say that good as was her acting in the theatre, it was nothing compared to what she did in the house. She acted so well, mother says, that she might have been taken for a lady." "Do you know what Rachel would do when she returned to her comrades?" said Mrs. Kendal. "She

would give an imitation of every one she met—beginning with your mother.”

When supper and its pleasant after-chat are over, Mrs. Kendal, if she has a new part to study, will, when all the house is quiet, set herself to new work. There is a stillness at that time which she cannot get at any hour of the day. In the silence she reads her part, and, as its author knows, grasps its inmost meaning. There is a certain excitement, she thinks, in thus working in the silent watches of the night, and certainly her results justify her methods.

Among other things that occupy her more than busy life is the important question of the stage dressing of the ladies of their company. She knows very well that pretty dress is nowadays one of the attractions of the theatre, and that to be really attractive it must be superintended with perfect taste. Before a prolonged tour she often has as many as two hundred feminine costumes, and their colour contrasts, to consider. The task must be an enormous one.

Her own dress is always perfect and appropriate. Does any one remember in what sweet and ladylike simplicity she clothed Kate Verity in “The Squire”? Mr. Pinero had every reason

to be grateful for those appropriate and faultlessly fitting gowns.

And so it is with all her dresses, as witness her quiet heliotrope when contrasted with the pink and the roses of her unconscious young rival in “The Elder Miss Blossom.”

And then the Kendals are as much at home when they are away from home. If you go to see them, as I have so often done, in provincial hotels, they are invariably surrounded by some of their household gods. The same homely comforts, the same genial hospitality, the same warm handshake to an old friend—all are there.

And in their intervals of leisure she is busy with her needlework; and he at the window, sketch-book in hand, is making an admirable study of “over the way.” His unique collection of such drawings from all sorts of hotel outlooks must some day be published.



## CHAPTER XI

### *PICKING UP THE THREADS.*

IN writing about the Kendals' experiences in America, I, in a way, missed the thread of my story, for in the intervals between those far-off tours they did a vast amount of work in England, and produced many new plays that demand record. Though on the termination of his partnership with Mr. Hare, Mr. Kendal resolved to throw aside the cares of a permanent management, he has organised seasons at the Court, Avenue, Garrick, and St. James's theatres; and has most industriously continued his provincial tours, embracing in them the smaller English towns as well as the great manufacturing centres. "Why all this hard work?" is a question often asked by the curious. The answer is that the Kendals love their art and are happy in its pursuit.

"The Weaker Sex," by A. W. Pinero, was

produced by them at Manchester on September 28, 1888—that is to say before their first visit to America. The play had been completed in 1884, and had been offered to Mr. John Clayton and Mr. Arthur Cecil, who were then in management at the Court Theatre; but they had come to the conclusion that their patrons wanted a lighter form of entertainment, and declined it in favour of the same author's "The Magistrate." When, after the lapse of nearly four years, it was offered to the Kendals they felt that it would suit them, and accepted it.

In 1860, in one of the earliest numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine*, appeared some verses entitled "Unspoken Dialogue," signed by R. Monckton Milnes, in which the terrible position of a mother—

" Four decades o'er her life had met,  
And left her lovely still "—

and daughter in love with the same man was forcibly described. This was the theme that, with characteristic boldness, Mr. Pinero had chosen for "The Weaker Sex," and since *his* dialogue was perforce *spoken*, the difficulties of the case were a hundredfold increased. The writer of the poem escaped from the tangle



created by the unfortunate but by no means impossible state of affairs by causing the mother to yield in favour of her child; the dramatist dealt with it in two ways. At the outset he gave his play the conventional "happy ending," but, finding this unsatisfactory, he altered the *dénouement* and brought the curtain down on a picture of sorrow.

Mr. Kendal, too, seemed uncertain about his part. At first he played Dudley Silchester, the good genius of the piece, but afterwards abandoned it for the less popular character of Ira Lee, the poet, and the beloved of the two unhappy women. The sacrifice was no doubt for the good of the play, but though he acted the difficult part with his usual tact and taste, it could not add to his fame. Mrs. Kendal undertook a very trying task.

Lady Vivash is a woman who, in a moment of girlish folly, has wrecked the happiness of her life, and who finds a bar to its renewal in the offspring of her loveless union. That throughout the representation of such a complex character as this the actress should be consistently womanly, tender, and always in sympathy with her audience spoke volumes for her skill. In the really great scenes in which this hapless

heroine met her old lover, recognised that he was the man spoken of as the bridegroom-elect of her own daughter, made her sacrifice on the girl's behalf, and pleaded with the man for her child's happiness, Mrs. Kendal played with matchless art.

After its trial trip in the country "The Weaker Sex" was, on March 16, 1889, produced at the Court Theatre. The Kendals were admirably supported by a company that included Mr. W. H. Vernon (who gave an admirable rendering of the part originally played by Mr. Kendal), Mr. Edward Righton, Miss Violet Vanbrugh, and Miss Annie Hughes. But its subject was against it, and although enthusiastically received and greatly admired by the critical "The Weaker Sex" did not enjoy a prolonged London run. In America the play was highly successful.

It was on the autumn tour of 1888 that Mr. Kendal appeared for the first time in Charles Mathews's once famous part of Mr. Gatherwool. It so often falls to his lot to play serious parts that one is apt to forget what an admirable light comedian he is, but those who have seen his Mr. Dabchick in "How to Make Home Happy," or his Hugh de Brass, in "A Regular Fix," know

that he is most happily qualified to represent characters identified with the name of the most mercurial of actors. He certainly grasped to perfection the eccentricities of the absent-minded Mr. Gatherwool, and, though the farce was found to be crude (indeed it is little more than a sketch), the impersonation was irresistible. The vacant look of the preoccupied and foggy-minded individual was admirably conveyed, and his half-unconscious actions were most easily and naturally managed.

Another play belonging to this period, and produced during the season at the Court Theatre, was Mr. Sydney Grundy's comedy "A White Lie." It is a play written in its author's happiest vein—its dialogue is terse and sparkling—and it provided the Kendals with two of those finely drawn yet homelike comedy characters in which the public love to see them. In Kate Desmond Mrs. Kendal found one of her favourite comedy characters. Mr. Grundy's heroine is the ideal queen of a happy home, and her bright presence and buoyant spirits were absolutely infectious. There were moments in this play that struck me as amongst the best things she had done. The naïve manner in which she told her husband of her girlhood's

engagement to another man was admirable ; her little outburst of grief as she sat at the piano after the departure of her dearly loved lord, while her child danced her doll to the accompaniment of her music, was ineffably touching ; and the scene in the last act in which, little by little, she confessed the "white lie" (on which the plot of the play hinges) and its consequences was the very perfection of comedy acting.

Mr. Kendal had a part founded on the effective John Mildmay lines. Sir George Molyneux is always requiring a nap, but he sleeps with one eye open, and is the *deus ex machinâ* of the story. Few actors could bestow on the character the exact degree of ease, polish, and carefully subdued strength of will that it requires. Exaggerated it might easily degenerate into caricature. Carefully and artistically handled as it was by Mr. Kendal, it became a really valuable stage study.

On September 18, 1890, it was my good fortune to be in the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Birmingham, when Mrs. Kendal (there was no part for Mr. Kendal in the play) appeared for the first time in a one-act drama from the pen of an author who chose to hide his identity under the *nom-de-plume* of X. L., entitled "It



*Photography*

MRS. KENDAL IN 1899.

*Elliott & Fry*



was a Dream." It had a curious little history. It was originally written in French, and, under the title of "*La Fin du Bonheur*," was accepted for production by the critical committee of the Comédie Française. Pending its opportunity there the author translated it into English, and Mrs. Kendal saw in the principal character a part that she desired to play. Why she has not played it over and over again is a mystery I have never been able to fathom.

Mrs. Kendal's part was that of a loving and confiding wife who, through misrepresentation and misunderstanding, becomes the prey of jealousy. We saw the unhappy woman at first fighting against the green-eyed monster, and then step by step, and as scraps of damning circumstantial evidence were brought home to her, yielding to its power, until she sank down in a very agony of despair. How really great Mrs. Kendal was in this scene is difficult to describe. As one watched her ever-changing face, and noted the nervous action of her hands and tortured restlessness of body, one seemed to share in the horrible torment of her mind, and to feel the heat of the burning fire that was consuming her very soul. There was no straining after effect, no trick of theatrical art was brought

into use ; it was simply the faithful picture of an agonised wife and heart-broken woman who in one moment is compelled to think that her husband is a scoundrel, and that her home and happiness are ruined.

Luckily the author gave the piece a happy ending, and at the fall of the curtain there was a great demonstration. The applause was tumultuous, and the packed audience was not satisfied until Mrs. Kendal had reappeared some three or four times, and told them in a pretty little speech that "it was the first time she had appeared as a jealous wife, and that she hoped to be more perfect in the part by and by."

As people went away from the theatre that night they were saying to each other, "Oh ! if Mrs. Kendal had been a man, how wonderfully she would have played Othello !" Mrs. Kendal has not even ambited, as many actresses do, to play Hamlet, but it must not be forgotten that she has carefully studied that magnificently drawn character and, in lecture form, given her opinions concerning it. A very refined and attractive picture she made on the evening when, plainly dressed in black silk, and without any decoration in her auburn hair, she appeared at the Westbourne Park Institute to give her views



on Shakespeare's masterpiece—"Poor things," she declared, "but her own."

In the course of a most interesting address she protested against the generally averred opinion that Shakespeare was a bad actor. His instructions to actors, she said, would remain authoritative for all time. Then, in holiday humour, she recited those instructions, "suiting the action to the word, the word to the action." "Assuming," she declared, "that Shakespeare was a perfect representative of the ghost in 'Hamlet,' he could not have been so unless he had the physical qualities which rendered him fit for other parts."

Without entertaining a shadow of doubt as to the genuineness of the poet, and treating Hamlet as a psychological study, the attractive lecturer regarded him as a human sensitive plant composed of high intellect, of nervous temperament, rendered morbid, like all such natures, by a quick sensibility. "Yet the pride of our great dramatist," she said later on, "was not in his philosophy, but in his lifelike delineation of character." The stronger passages of the play, "so full of quotations," were robustly discussed and illustrated by perfect reading, while its livelier phases were given sympathetically.

Another success for the Kendals was the welcome revival of Messrs. Herman Merivale and Palgrave Simpson's fine play, "All For Her," in which, in the "seventies," Mr. John Clayton had made such a marked success. This play was founded on Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities," and its hero, Hugh Trevor, was an avowed reproduction of Sydney Carton, though, as a matter of fact, the collaborators had deftly contrived to blend their plot with that of Thackeray's "Henry Esmond." It is an excellent piece of stagecraft, and it gave Mr. Kendal a fine chance. Every one knew that he would be admirable in the comedy moods of the complex character he had undertaken to play, but few were prepared for the intensity of the power, or the delicacy of the pathos that he displayed in the later scenes. In the character of Lady Marsden Mrs. Kendal acted with her usual charm and sincerity, but it cannot be said that the part was worthy of her.

In Birmingham, on the 2nd of December, 1892, the Kendals produced Mr. Henry J. W. Dam's drama, "Prince Karatoff." As its title indicated, this was a play that dealt with those Russian conspiracies that have often proved theatrically effective. It contained some good

character-drawing, several exciting scenes, and, here and there, excellent acting opportunities. Stepping out of his usual line of characters, Mr. Kendal looked and played the part of the elderly General Karatoff with exemplary care and *finesse*, and Mrs. Kendal had moments in which she rose to the height of true tragedy. But the one really original character in the play was that of a benevolent old maker of infernal machines, and it was excellently acted by Mr. C. P. Huntley.

In connection with this first performance of Mr. Dam's play, which was most enthusiastically received, I must relate a little anecdote illustrative of Mrs. Kendal's wonderful presence of mind. There was a scene in which she was compelled to bid a long farewell to her child. On her knees, she clasped him to her breast, while the attendants, who had orders to take the boy away, impatiently waited at the back. The last tender, lingering embrace was given in the presence of a hushed house, and the child was almost forcibly led from its agonised mother's arms. In order not to see this sad exit Mrs. Kendal had, apparently, closed her eyes, but she opened them, when a most unexpected titter ran through the audience. I, who knew her so well,

realised what the nervous look on her face meant. Had the situation, and her handling of it, failed? Then, in an instant, she grasped the cause of the unseemly giggles. In going out the child's cap had most awkwardly fallen off its head and remained upon the stage. Mrs. Kendal knew exactly what to do. With a loving cry she seized the cap, covered it with kisses, and pressed it to her heart. She at once killed the irreverent laughter, and the applause that followed was not unmingled with tears. Every one thought that the effect, instead of being sheer accident, had been most carefully arranged, and I even heard the author complimented on having invented a very original piece of stage business!

The sequel to the story is funny. A long, long time was supposed to elapse before Mrs. Kendal, in her character of Katherine Vail, was destined to see her child again; but, when at last it was restored to her, it was *wearing the same cap!* Happily the audience did not notice the blunder, but I could see the little look of dismay on Mrs. Kendal's face. When, after the piece was over, I went "round" to offer her my congratulations, she was good-humouredly upbraiding the "dresser" who had made the mistake. "How

*could* you ! how *could* you ! ” she cried. “ Don’t you know that for months and months of trial and torment that cap has been worn upon my heart, and yet you send the boy home in it ! ”

Under the title of “ The Silver Shell ” “ Prince Karatoff ” was produced in London at the Avenue Theatre, and it was then that Mr. William Archer, catching the tragic note that she undeniably struck, said : “ If we are to have a Lady Macbeth, a Volumnia, a Constance, in the present generation, Mrs. Kendal is the woman. Having been our Mrs. Jordan, why should she not become our Mrs. Siddons ? ”

It was in the September of 1893 that I went to Liverpool to see my friends in a two-act play from the brilliant pen of Mr. R. C. Carton entitled “ The Fall of the Leaf.” This, which was practically a Kendal duologue, very gracefully told the old story of a girl who, believing her first lover to be dead, is induced, against her inclinations, to marry another man. Then, of course, the old lover reappears, the young wife is tempted to go away with him, and at the last moment responds to the call of duty. All this was very cleverly portrayed ; the little piece was perfectly acted, and most cordially received. I

have often wondered why I have never heard of it again.

Although I have heard numbers of thoughtless people lightly speak of Mr. Sydney Grundy's "The Greatest of These" as a dull stage sermon, it undoubtedly contains some of that gifted and trenchant author's most brilliant work, and for me it has always had a peculiar fascination, as it would for any one familiar with the dreary routine of Nonconformist life in an English provincial town. No doubt it is in some senses a peculiar play. It does not depend upon theatrical situations, and in the way of scenery and costume it offers little that appeals to the eye, but it shows character-drawing and a knowledge of human nature worthy of all admiration. Mr. Grundy's characters were surely studied from the life, and he might have taken for his text Coleridge's words, "Experience, like the stern lights of a ship, illuminates the track over which we have passed."

Who does not know the father of the Charles Dickens "Gradgrind" type—a praiseworthy and estimable man from many points of view, but a sorry hearthmate for a young, impulsive, and imaginative wife? With the best of in



*Photo by*

MR. KENDAL IN 1899.

*Elliott & Fry.*





tentions, and ever pluming himself on his own self-abnegation and respectability, he unwittingly crushes the joy out of the lives of all who depend upon him, and by reason of his own prim goodness unknowingly teaches his wife and children to fear and deceive him. Oh yes! he is an everyday character, and he was admirably portrayed by Mr. Kendal. "He has an umbrella, mother," says his daughter, as she looks at him through the window. "Was father born with an umbrella?" It is the keynote to her father's character. Who does not know the sort of man who seems to have been born with an umbrella? Who does not know the sort of life that that excellent person may be expected to lead? Who does not know how that umbrella will get into the way of other people? "Our duty," sighs his poor father-taught daughter, "is always to do what we don't want to; and if we do want to, then it is not our duty." As the sorely tried but sometime errant wife Mrs. Kendal played with her accustomed power and sincerity, but I always thought the author might have dealt more tenderly with the character. The acting honours of the play, and they were high ones, were carried off by Mr. Kendal.

"The Greatest of These" was produced at Hull in the autumn of 1895, and after a successful provincial tour found its London home at the Garrick Theatre.

To this ever-growing list of new plays must be added Mr. Allen Upward's "A Flash in the Pan" (afterwards renamed "A Cruel Heritage") and Mr. Walter Frith's "Not Wisely but Too Well." Both contain excellent work, and no doubt both will be seen again.

But the gem of their new collection is Messrs. Ernest Hendrie and Metcalfe Wood's charming three-act comedy, "The Elder Miss Blossom." In this, if I mistake not, both Mr. and Mrs. Kendal have found parts that they will be able to play for many a long year to come. As Andrew Quick Mr. Kendal has one of those comedy characters that suit him so well, and as Dorothy Blossom Mrs. Kendal is—there is no other word for it—fascinating.

It is a well-drawn as well as a most natural character. Most of us know the good and lovable maiden "auntie" who lavishes her affections on her brothers and sisters and their children, but who, maybe, has a warm place in her heart of hearts for the imaginary husband

and little ones of her own that in her middle age are denied to her. It was a good idea to put such an everyday and sweet-natured soul into a play ; it was a fortunate thing for the clever authors of "The Elder Miss Blossom" that they found Mrs. Kendal willing to give it life. In the face of her long series of stage triumphs it seems a bold thing to say, and yet I believe that Mrs. Kendal has never presented a more perfect picture than in the second act of "The Elder Miss Blossom." She has no exquisitely written and weight-carrying lines to deliver, as in the never-to-be-forgotten Galatea days. She has, by the sheer force of acting, to lay bare the working of a true and sensitive woman's heart, crushed by an unexpected blow. There is no striving after effect in this unique performance—it is as quietly as it is wonderfully done. The delicacy of its pathos has never been excelled, and it goes home to the hearts of her spectators. She is equally admirable too in the happier moments given to the character, and nothing more touching than the scene in which she receives the presents for the wedding which the audience know is so unlikely to be hers has been seen on the stage.

Ah ! sweet, brave, Dorothy Blossom ! She

must have known by heart Cowper's beautifully summed-up thought—

“ Oh ! if the selfish knew how much they lost,  
What would they not endeavour, not endure,  
To imitate as far as in them lay,  
Him who his wisdom and his power employs  
In making others happy.”

After their usual trip in the country the Kendals took “ The Elder Miss Blossom ” to the St. James's Theatre, and they might have been playing the piece there still if Mr. Alexander had not been compelled to reappear on his own boards. After their last performance to a crowded and delighted audience a leading critic wrote : “ Unluckily for all who love genuine art, ‘ Miss Blossom ’ has to retire. She has been the noblest thing of the dramatic year, the one emphatic proof that Mrs. Kendal is the greatest actress we possess.”

Yes—without perhaps quite realising it—the Kendals have to their fullest extent exercised their power of “ making others happy,” and to Mrs. Kendal I would commend the words of Hazlitt when he wrote of the farewell performance of Mrs. Siddons :—

“ She was not only the idol of the people, she not only hushed the tumultuous shouts of the pit

in breathless expectation, and quenched the blaze of surrounding beauty in silent tears, but to the retired and lonely student, through long years of solitude, her face has shone as if an angel appeared from heaven ; her name has been as if a voice had opened the chamber of the human heart, or as if a trumpet had awakened the sleeping and the dead. To have seen Mrs. Siddons was an event in every one's life ; and does she think we have forgot her ? ”

And to have seen the Kendals has been an event in most of our lives—and they will not be forgotten.

As Bret Harte beautifully says—

“ Never a tear bedims the eye  
That time and patience will not dry ;  
Never a lip is curved with pain  
That can't be kissed into smiles again.”

By their consummate art the Kendals have dried many tears and have revived many smiles ; and, although they may not be conscious of it, their names are as household words among the multitudes who, all unknown to them, have learned to love them.

FINIS.



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